DEBURAU

BY SACHA GUITRY

THE ENGLISH VERSION BY

H. GRANVILLE BARKER

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DEBURAU

A COMEDY

BY

SACHA GUITRY

IN AN ENGLISH VERSION

BY

HARLEY GRANVILLE BARKER

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1921

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PRODUCED

BY

DAVID BELASCO

ON DECEMBER 27, 1920

AT THE BELASCO THEATRE, NEW YORK

WITH THE FOLLOWING CAST:

JEAN-GASPARD DEBURAU		LIONEL ATWILL
MARIE DUPLESSIS		ELSIE MACKAY
MONSIEUR BERTRAND, the director	Comedians of the Theatre Funambules	BERNARD A. REINOLD
ROBILLARD		HUBERT DRUCE
LAURENT		JOSEPH HERBERT
LAPLACE		ROWLAND BUCKSTONE
JUSTINE		MARGOT KELLY
MADAME REBARD		PAULINE MERRIAM
CLARA		MARIE BRYAR
HONORINE		ISABEL LEIGHTON
CLEMENT		EDMUND GURNEY
THE "BARKER," the Man with the Big Drum		SIDNEY TOLER
THE MONEY TAKER		HELEN REIMER
THE UNKNOWN LADY		LYLIA BURNAND
A JOURNALIST		ST. CLAIR BAYFIELD
THE LADY WITH THE LORGNETTE		EDEN GRAY
MADAME RABOUIN		ROSE COGHLAN
THE YOUNG MAN		JOHN ROCHE
MAID		SALLIE BERGMAN
MASTER CHARLES		GEORGIE RYAN
CHARLES DEBURAU		MORGAN FARLEY
A DOCTOR		JOHN L. SHINE
THE PROMPTER		FRED ~~BICKEL~~ March
SCENE SHIFTER		ROBERT ROLAND

PERSONS IN THE PANTOMIME

PIERROT	LIONEL ATWILL
COLUMBINE	MARGOT KELLY
DUCHESS	PAULINE MERRIAM
MAID, to the Duchess	ISABEL LEIGHTON
JEWELLER	EDMUND GURNEY
A ROUE	ROWLAND BUCKSTONE
A SWEETHEART	HOPE SUTHERLAND
A LOVER	MARINOS BYRON
ORGAN GRINDER	HUBERT DRUCE
TITINE	MILDRED CALL
ALEXANDRE, a gendarme	EDWARD MAURELLI
A GENTLEMAN	EDWIN NOEL
ANOTHER GENTLEMAN	NICK MORRIS

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NOTE

It was the business of the present translator of Deburau—and therefore he hesitates formally to adopt the title—to provide for English speaking actors, as nearly as might be, parallel opportunities to those the French had enjoyed in the production of the play. No theory of dramatic translation was brought into question; this was the task set.

It was easy and obvious then to keep to the irregular verse, if the difficulty of peppering it with rhymes was faced. This was both that any hint of the peculiarly English blank verse might be avoided and with it any temptation to weightiness of speech be the better shunned, and that a certain amusing artificiality, even impertinence of method might be added—by the actor quite noticeably added.

Sacha Guitry's meaning has, it is hoped, been stuck to, detail by detail. But where it has seemed

that only a paraphrase could avoid the appearance of labouring it (a sin that he never commits) the English does sometimes travel wide of the literal mark. And it is, generally speaking, upon such lines as these that, when questions have arisen, the decisions have, one by one, each for some practical end, been made.

One could defend this method in theory. The play is material for the actor. In any translation he must perforce be presented with goods that have lost their first freshness in transit. There will be points where to think and feel as a foreigner will render him as unintelligible to his audience as the foreign speech itself would do. One must "adapt," bearing in mind what his means of interpretation are. Cutting is seldom a good way out of a difficulty; the play is too soon impoverished and its structure weakened. The translator, indeed, is more often under the temptation, knowing, as he goes along, how much is being lost, to attempt to compensate by addition. For the actor is demanding—and has a right to—full measure of material. With his task to come he will be at a grave disadvantage without it. Does this mean that if it cannot be supplied him according to the

strict rules of translation he—and we—should go without altogether? Possibly.

But a play in any case must not be judged by the printed page—where it lies inanimate, incomplete. That first translation from its author's mind is but one of many, and whether it be found completed in a native or an alien theatre, the difference is but of the number of removes, the number and variety of translators that will have been employed.

This is neither excuse nor justification for any liberties that follow—though indeed, they are not numerous or ever wilful—but there is implied a recommendation to read M. Sacha Guitry's play in the original when such a far better opportunity occurs.

H. G. B.

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THE PEOPLE OF THE PLAY

JEAN GASPARD DEBURAU
MARIE DUPLESSIS
MONSIEUR BERTRAND
ROBILLARD
LAURENT
LAPLACE
JUSTINE
MADAME RÉBARD
CLARA
HONORINE
CLEMENT
THE BARKER[1]
THE MONEY TAKER
THE PROMPTER
} of the Théâtre des Funambules
MADAME RABOUIN
CHARLES DEBURAU
A YOUNG MAN
A DOCTOR
A LADY
A JOURNALIST
MARIE DUPLESSIS' MAID

[1] The French word *Aboyeur* has found its way to America, though hardly to England, in the simple translation "Barker." This is the man who stands outside the booth with a big drum and barks out the attractions of the show within.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

In the pantomime the parts are thus distributed:

PIERROT ..... Jean Gaspard Deburau
THE OLD CLO' MAN ..... Laurent
CASSANDRE ..... Laplace
THE MARQUIS ..... Clement
THE DUCHESS ..... Madame Rébard
COLUMBINE ..... Justine
THE SOUBRETTE ..... Clara

There is besides an orchestra of two violins, a piano, a double bass, a cornet.

Among the audience watching the play in the Théâtre des Funambules can be seen Victor Hugo, Georges Sand, and Alfred de Musset.

The prologue is given in front of the theatre, the first act in the auditorium, the second at Marie Duplessis', the third in Deburau's garret, and the fourth act in the theatre again.

We are in Paris in 1839.

THE PROLOGUE

The scene is in front of the Théâtre des Funambules[1] (The Rope-dancers). Bertrand, the money-taker, a faded little woman, and the Barker are to be seen; the Barker with his big drum is very prominent. The orchestra is seated on a bench playing away.

By the door a written bill is hanging, which announces:

BY SPECIAL LICENCE
TO-DAY
SEPTEMBER 21, 1839
FOR THIS OCCASION ONLY
THE WONDERFUL PERFORMANCE
OF
THE OLD CLO' MAN
BY
M. COT. D'ORDAN
IN WHICH
JEAN GASPARD DEBURAU
WILL APPEAR

[1] If an English equivalent is needed, the "Follies" Theatre seems as good as another.

Another placard on the door of the theatre tells us the prices of the seats.

The orchestra stops. The Barker with his big drum steps forward and begins:

Barker:

Pleasure seekers of Paris, you never need be at a
Loss for amusement while you have our theatre.
First, O mighty population,
Admire the moderation
Of the prices that we charge!
Come in a cab, or in a coach and four,
We do not ask you more.
No, you can cut a dash, and cut it thrifty,
In our stage boxes which are one franc fifty.
The upper boxes are not quite so large
But you sit closer to her. Man alive,
Aren't they a bargain at one franc twenty-five!
Orchestra . . . fifteen sous.
Can you do
Better for fifteen sous?
But, wait a bit!
We admit
You to the pit
For ten,

And one word more!
Though when
I tell you you may wonder how we do it, yet we do;
you can get into the gallery for four.
And what a show!
Surely you know
That there's nothing to touch it.
Its merits are such it—
What, sir! You're going next door!
Well, it's not one of my ways
To say a word in dispraise
Of a rival.
Thank God, here we don't need to boast, we can
afford to be modest and civil
But, it's kinder to warn you . . . though truly
you'll go there just once and no more.
Unless you prefer—some people do of course—
A singer that's hoarse;
And a dancer rheumatic;
And acrobats about as acrobatic
As a spavined broken-winded cab horse;
A comedian, as witty as the wild Man of Borneo.
That's the fare
You'll get there,
By all means try it, my dear sir.

While here you've Deburau
That marvellous Pierrot.
The one and only
Supreme and lonely
In his fame.
For all the others, all Pierrots
Before he came,
Were nothing better than puppets of wood.
He's the first that has understood
What can be made of that weird white figure.
You sit and wonder how it's done.
Never a word he speaks, and yet—
Never a wink to point the fun
—And yet you laugh,
And yet you feel your eyes grow bigger.
You may even feel the tears come tumbling.
How does he do it, how with half—
Not half—not a quarter of what other actors get
Words and music and make-up to help them?
I must say it's humbling
(If I were an actor I'd feel it so)
To be left no—
Nowhere at all by a mere Pierrot,
By a bundle of white rags called Pierrot.

And when Pierrot
Is Deburau
That's so.
For the rest of the cast:
Alexandre—Monsieur Laplace; The Marshall—
Laurent the—Front places? No, sir, I much fear
that we've sold the last.
No, not quite the last.
There are just two
Left. Will they do?
Laurent, the Marshall, Madame Rébard, la
Duchesse.
Can I give you her address . . . her *private*
address?
I *could!* The soubrette—
Mademoiselle Clara is the soubrette.
One more yet.
Columbine, Justine.
Yes, indeed, Justine!
And where have you been
Not to know Justine?
She'll turn your head when she turns on her
toe.
(Which Justine! Are there twenty Justines?)
New dresses! New scenes!

And a new two-act play
Entitled "Old Clo'!"
We begin. Right away!

He retires. The orchestra strikes up again and the scene changes to the inside of the theatre, where we face the stage upon which the performance of "The Old Clo' Man" is proceeding . . .

THE FIRST ACT

THE FIRST ACT

. . . The house is full and enthusiastic. Some of the audience are fashionably dressed; and in one of the boxes is Victor Hugo with Georges Sand and Alfred de Musset. But the greater part of the people there are "the people," and some of the men are in their shirt sleeves. Before the curtain rose, no doubt they were whistling, singing, jostling one another while they waited.

(Here follows the story of "The Old Clo' Man" as told by Théophile Gautier in the *Revue de Paris* of September 4, 1842.)

"The scene is a street, a 'public place' just as it would be in a Molière play. Pierrot is walking to and fro, his hands tucked deep in his sleeves, head bent, and lagging feet. He is sad, his bosom is charged with secret sorrow. But his heart is empty and his purse no fuller; for if he asks his

master, Cassandre, for money, all he gets is one of those most peremptory kicks which make up so large a part of pantomime dialogue.

"Poor Pierrot! What a wretched business! Kicks, but no halfpence. Little to eat and that not often. Can we wonder that he looks pale; who wouldn't? And to crown his misery Pierrot is in love, not with Columbine's pretty black-eyed phiz and lozenged flounces, but with a lady, a very great lady, a duchess at least, whom he saw getting out of her carriage, at a church door, at the opera, no matter where. In love as he is and half-starved as well Pierrot is really afraid that his looks may suffer. He feels his nose; it has grown so thin; his legs, they're no bigger than a ballet dancer's arms. But that is not what really troubles him, for, after all, a lover only looks more interesting for looking wan and pale. He longs to go into the great world of fashion where he may see his adored one—and Pierrot has no clothes at all but his blouse and his baggy white trousers. What, go to a duchess's party dressed like that! Neither clothes nor money, what can he do? How make his way into those marvellous gardens of Eden, all glorious with the glitter of candelabra, with

ladies, with flowers—he has seen them vaguely shining through the lighted windows of the houses of the great.

"While Pierrot is a prey to these bitter thoughts, cursing his gods, fortune, and fate, there passes by an old clo' man with his pack of cast-off garments.

"'Oh, if I only had that apple-green coat and those fine striped trousers,' says Pierrot to himself, his eye shining covetously, his fingers itching from temptation; and even as he says it he stretches his hand out and draws it back, once and again. The old clo' man has just been buying the discarded wardrobe of a National Guard, past the age limit, whose sword he carries under his arm, looking rather less warlike than an umbrella. Its innocent brass hilt is there, to Pierrot's very hand, and he seizes it. The old clo' man is going his way unconscious. Pierrot but stands motionless grasping the hilt of the sword, and the blade is swiftly drawn from the sheath which the old man carries along with him. From the shining blade a devilish thought is reflected in Pierrot's face and in an instant he sheathes it again, not in its scabbard, but in the body of the poor wretch before him; runs him through and through, and he falls stone dead.

"Pierrot, quite unconcerned, takes from the pack the smartest clothes he can find, and then, to cover the traces of his crime, flings the corpse through the grating of a cellar. Safe from discovery then, he is off home, to dress himself in his finery and to set out to find the great lady of his love. When all of a sudden, up pushes the cellar flap and through it his victim's ghost arises, wrapped in a trailing shroud, the point of the sword blade still sticking from his breast and calling in a hollow voice, just as before 'Old Clo'! Old Clo'!'

"How shall one picture the terror on Pierrot's whitened face as he hears this voice from the tomb! He makes up his mind though to be done once and for all with such fears and hallucinations. And he snatches a great billet of wood from a stack near by and begins a terrible fight with the ghost, which escapes and parries the first few blows, but in the end gets the great billet full on the head. It knocks him clean into the cellar again. Pierrot, to make assurance doubly sure, hurriedly throws all the logs of wood on the top of him, and then, piling sarcasm upon villainy too, he leans his head over the grating and imitating the ghost's voice, calls 'Old Clo'! Old Clo'!'

"Is not this an excellent spectacle, a fine jest, a queer imagining, such as Shakespeare himself would not have disowned!"

Unluckily the limitations of the theatre have obliged the present author, this first scene over, to simplify and to pick out from among the astonishing events of the play, those which the needs of his own, as he has planned it, will allow him

This is how Théophile Gautier's account of it ends, after he has described the horrifyingly ridiculous ball where Pierrot meets his death and the just punishment of his crime in the embrace of the Old Clo' Man who, that he may dance the better, presses him to his bosom, in such a fashion that "the victim and his murderer are spitted on one sword as two beetles might be stuck on the same pin."

And he adds:

"Is not this a queer play, with its mixture of horror and laughter? Have not the ghost of Banquo and the shade of Hamlet a quite peculiar relation to the spectre of the Old Clo' Man and is it not very interesting to find a Shakespeare at the 'Funambules'? This little performance en-

shrines a deep, a true, a highly moral *mythos*, which has no need to be embedded in Sanskrit, to give rise to a cloud of commentaries, to be understood.

"Pierrot walking the street in his white blouse, his baggy white trousers, his floured face, lost in his dreams, does not that symbolize for us the human heart, still white and innocent, but wrung by cruel longings for the things beyond its reach? The sword hilt presenting itself to his grasp, beckoning him with its treacherous yellow glitter, is not that a most striking symbol of the power of opportunity over the already weakened and distracted mind? The ease with which the blade slips through the victim's body denotes how easy crime is, and how one single action may cost us our immortal soul. When he first seized the sword Pierrot meant nothing but a bit of mischief. The ghost of the old man rising from the cellar tells us that crime will out, and when Pierrot with a blow from the wooden billet knocks the poor ghost back into its depths again, does not the author most aptly demonstrate that while with much effort we may stave off our punishment, for all that the day of reckoning never fails? The ghost stands for re-

morse, how vividly, terribly, enfigured! The little phrase 'Old Clo'!' which can throw Pierrot into such an agony of fear is as great a stroke of genius as Macbeth's famous 'It will have blood!' The victim was uttering his cry at the moment of his murder; the words and accent are stamped forever in the murderer's memory. And the scene in which Pierrot declares his love while the ghost is heard muttering under the floor, and every now and then sticking his head up, does not that show us—and how vividly!—that nothing, nothing can still the remorse lying deep down in our hearts? Well may he try to forget, to intoxicate himself with wine or with passion, the spectre is always there. Ever at his side he feels the chill breath and hears the chuckling whisper 'Old Clo'! Old Clo'!"'

So soon as the play is over the audience having enthusiastically called for Deburau the theatre empties quickly. One lady, rather good-looking, takes care to remain the last, and then hides herself. A moment later no one is left but M. Bertrand, Robillard, the Money-Taker, the Barker, and this lady.

Robillard

That's a go if you like!

Bertrand

What an audience! Such class!

Robillard

How much in the house?

Bertrand

She's totting it up now. I don't know when
We've done better.

Money-Taker

I'm just through. Two–seven–
three–ten . . .

Bertrand

Hurry up! Here you can pass
Me over the transfers. I'll strike
A balance with them.

Money-Taker

They're somewhere close
On twenty-eight francs!

Bertrand

Call it twenty-eight.

Money-Taker

Seven-o-three and twenty-eight makes seven hundred and thirty-three.

Bertrand

Can't be!

Money-Taker

It is!

Robillard

Show me!

Money-Taker

You'll see . . . it's as I've said.

Bertrand

We only hold seven hundred. At this rate
We'll want a larger theatre.

Money-Taker

And three seventy-five for oranges.
And two for gingerbread.

Robillard

And what a triumph for Deburau!
And he found in his dressing-room . . . do you know
When he came . . . a bunch of roses.

Bertrand

Oh, these society ladies!

Robillard

Yes, I suppose he's
Got one of them after him again!
But he has a way,
Rather a nice way, of choking them off.
He always carries in his pocket
A little picture of his wife. And, oh, the shock it
Is when he takes it out, just when he has made his
Greatest impression. And then he'll say,
"Isn't she pretty?" And they're bound to agree,
And . . . well, that is the end of that, you see!
Have you ever seen her? No, she has never been here.

Ah, we may laugh;
But he's quite right,
Though it may sound queer.
His place is here and hers is at home.
That suits some.
By the way, who was that here to-night,
A striking face and long black hair,
Very long hair and very black?
He sat there.

The Barker

What *is* his name? Oh, yes, I know it . . .
Victor—something beginning with H. That's right.
He's a sort of a Poet . . .
Victor Huguet. That's it.

Bertrand

Hugo.

The Barker

Huguet.

Bertrand

No, no!
Victor Hugo!

The Barker

Well, what's the odds, Huguet or Hugo!

Bertrand

Here, who's that hiding at the back
Of that box?

He goes towards a lady who is sitting discreetly in the shadow of an empty box and asks most politely—

Pardon me, are you waiting for . . . ?

The Lady

Monsieur Deburau.

Bertrand

Oh, of course, quite so.

He comes back and announces in a whisper to the others . . .

Deburau!

Robillard

Ah ha! She's the one that brought the roses.

Bertrand

And what about his dear wife now!
A pity it's to-night she chooses.

I'd have stood you all a supper. But how
Could we do without Deburau?

Robillard

Oh, no!

Bertrand

A nuisance we've lost him!
We'd have been seven . . . eight . . . nine
. . . ten . . .

The Barker

(*to the Money-Taker, behind his hand*)

Watch him adding up what it's *not* going to cost
him!

Bertrand

Ah, well, some other time, when . . .

Justine has come through the little pass door to join the group.

Justine

What a performance! *I* never had
Such a success!
How much in the house?

Bertrand

Oh, not so bad.

Justine

How much?

Bertrand

Well, guess

Justine

Six hundred?

Bertrand

More!

Justine

No!

Bertrand

Nearly eight!

Laurent, following close, now joins them.

Justine

Eight *hundred.*

Laurent

Eight hundred what?

Justine

Francs in the house!

Laplace and Clara arrive.

Laplace

How much?

Laurent

Guess.

Bertrand

Over eight hundred francs!

Clara

Monsieur Bertrand, for eight hundred francs
I think you give thanks
By taking your talented company out on a spree.
We await
A carouse!

Bertrand

I would . . . but Deburau can't come.

Justine

Why on earth can't he?

Robillard

Look and see.

Clara

What?

Robillard

Sh!

Clara

Where?

Robillard

There.

Justine

For our model husband! I'm struck dumb!

Clara

I don't think much of her, I declare.

Robillard

Why not?

Clara

Forty-five if she's a day!

Robillard

You may be right.

Justine

It must be dreadful to be forty-five.

Robillard

I doubt, my dear, if at the pace you live
You'll be much troubled in that way.
Good-night.

Clara

Not waiting for your dear Deburau?

Robillard

No. Good-night.

Madame Rébard arrives, buttonholing Robillard on his way out.

Madame Rébard

Has he gone?

Robillard

Who?

Madame Rébard

Deburau.

Robillard

Not yet. Good-night, all.

Everyone

Good-night.

Robillard departs.

Madame Rébard

Well, what sort of a house?

Bertrand

Nearly nine hundred francs.

Madame Rébard

Well!

Bertrand

I've always feared I'd find this house too small. They were standing at the back in ranks!

Clement passes at the back on his way out.

Clement

Good-night all.

Bertrand

Clement!

Clement

Guvnor!

Bertrand

Come here.

You and I have a bone to pick.

Clement

What about?

Bertrand

You know what about.
Now kindly hear
What I've got to say.
Do you mean, or don't you mean, to stick
To your contract?

Clement

Guvnor!

Bertrand

This isn't the way
To do it. To-day is Friday if I'm not mistaken
And your contract says—am I far out?—
That Thursday's your day of the week to get drunk on.
Now, how many glasses have you taken
To-day? Thank you, don't trouble to put it in words, I can tell
Pretty accurately—say to within fourteen—by the . . . !
What the devil's to be done with you? Aren't you ashamed?

Clement

Yes, I am.
Not of drinking though
And *you* don't care a damn
If I'm sober or not, you know.
You don't, when it doesn't show.
Well, I may be a sot,
But am I a child to be hauled up and blamed?
And this lying about it . . . !

Bertrand

Then why do you drink?

Clement

Because I like drinking; why else do you think?
Guvnor, you want me to stick to my contract.
That's fair.
Well, here's a fair offer. Make the one day into
two, and I will. There!

Bertrand

Two?

Clement

Monday and Thursday. 'Twon't hurt you
to give me Monday,

Monday the house is never full.
So why shouldn't I be. 'Scuse my vulgarity.
It'll pay you. Besides, it's an act of charity.
My self-respect sort of goes on strike
When I'm tied down by rule
To make a beast of myself upon one day.
That's an offence against human dignity.
Ask any other man how he would like
To be made such a slave of! He d not give a fig,
not he,
For contracts. My shame? Yes, I'm lost in it,
sunk in it.
If you've but one day to drink in you're bound to
get drunk in it.
You give me two days. Let's try how that plan
Works. If I'm drunk, well, at least I'll be drunk
like a man.
Is it a bargain?

Bertrand

Two days? Next time I shall give
you the lot.

Clement

The chuck?

Bertrand

You deserve it. Do you, or not?

Clement

Oh, if you chucked me I shouldn't blame you.
Guvnor . . . here's something on which you can sleep.
If I weren't such a damned good actor and you didn't get me so cheap
I'd have walked off long since and not stayed here to shame you.

Bertrand

Quite so . . . quite so. . . .
Well . . . we all have our failings, I know!
To-day's Friday. Saturday, Sunday, Monday? Monday will be all right.
But not a day more, remember!

Clement

Word of honour. Good-night.

Clement goes out.

Justine

Clara, who was that
Woman who sat

At the back of that box . . .
You couldn't see much but the pair of black eyes
of her . . . ?

Clara

Sh! There she is waiting for . . .

Justine

No, no, not she!
Very dark this one was, very thin. And two black
locks
Made her face look even thinner.
Diamonds on!
Very solemn, very affected, that was the size of her.
No, she's gone.

Clara

I don't think I know her.

Laurent

It was Marie Duplessis.

Clara

Oh!

Justine

No!

Laurent

Yes, indeed.

Justine

Well, as I'm a sinner!

Clara

There you are! It's a weed
Of a woman like that men go mad about.
Not even pretty!

Laurent

Not a bit . . . what you'd call pretty.

Clara

Now, don't be clever.
How old is she?

Laurent

Eighteen.

Justine

Oh, did you ever!
Innocent!!

Laurent

Well, a brother of mine who's a doctor helped bring
her into the world. He ought to know
And he says so.

Clara

Consumptive, isn't she?

Laurent

Yes, she went
That way early.

Justine

Oh, what a pity!

Clara

Yes, it's sad about
That.

Laurent

She's like a candle flame,
A rough breath will have it out. Can you blame
Men if they bring lanterns of gold
With such a candle to hold?

Madame Rébard

Sh! Deburau . . . !

Clara

Oh, give him an entrance!

Bertrand

How?

Madame Rèbard

I've an idea. Let's all stand in a row and bow.

Laurent

Stand in a row?

Laplace

And bow?

Laurent

Well, really, I say,
If you all of you feel
Such rapt admiration I suggest that you kneel.

Deburau comes from the stage. He carries the bunch of roses which he leaves on a bench. He listens for a moment, then joins the others. Laurent, not observing him, goes on . . .

Laurent

I admire the man, too.
But, surely we'll do
Our dear Gaspard a better turn in the end
If we're cooler and critical—

Deburau

Quite right, quite right.
Always be chary of praising your friends. Good-night.

Justine

Oh . . . Good-night.

Laurent

So long!

Deburau

Till to-morrow.

Madame Rébard

You're going?

Deburau

Why—Yes.

Bertrand

But she's waiting.

Deburau

She?

Clara

There.

Deburau

Where?

Clara

There; see the tip
of her dress.

Deburau

This isn't a joke?

Bertrand

No, she asked for you . . .
came and asked *me!*

Deburau

What a nuisance!

Bertrand

She brought you the roses, you'll see.

Deburau

Well, I must say thank you, I suppose.
Don't leave us alone now, whatever you do.

He goes rather unwillingly towards the hidden lady.

Madame, are you waiting . . . ?

The Lady

Yes, I was waiting . . .

Deburau

To see me?

The Lady

To see you.

Or rather to hear you speak.
Remember, nobody hears you speak.
It's uncanny to have so much said
To one in silence. So, if I saw you close,
I thought—forgive me—it might break the spell.
Or if you wove another one . . . well . . . ?

Deburau

How good of you! I know it must seem a freak
Of nature to be able to hold one's tongue.
D'you want to know how I do it? It's simple:
Go and sit among
Your friends and follow the thread
Of their talk. If you can get them to talk about you
So much the better. The whole thing lies
In the art of listening. For example . . .

The Lady

Forgive me—would you turn your eyes
To the right a little. Your friends here
Are experts in that art, I fear.

Deburau

That's true.

The Lady

So suppose we went . . .

Deburau

Where?

The Lady

Anywhere
A little less crowded . . . and empty.

Deburau

Together?

The Lady

My carriage is in the square.

Deburau

Quite so . . .

He begins to feel in his pockets.

The Lady

What's the matter?

Deburau

I was wondering whether . . .

The Lady

Your watch? It's not late.

Deburau

No, not my watch.

A miniature
That I always carry, I wasn't sure
I hadn't lost it, I wouldn't for worlds. Here we are!

He has fished a little miniature out of his pocket.

The Lady

What is it?

Deburau

As a painting, of course, not much of a catch!
My wife! Pretty, isn't she?

The Lady

Very.

Deburau

Most women think so. I suppose the dress
Looks a little old-fashioned. I wish she were here.
But if one day you'd care to pay her a visit . . .
Not now, of course. You're in a hurry . . .
I'd so like you to meet her. May I tell her we met?
May I give her these roses from you?

The Lady

What roses?

Deburau

These that you sent me.

The Lady

That *I* sent!

Deburau

My manager thought so, not I. I suppose he's
Mistaken.

The Lady (*icily*)

We all make mistakes. I regret
I've detained you.

Deburau (*a little wryly*)

I fear
That I'm more satisfactory seen and not heard.

The Lady

No, indeed, you're quite magnificent!
How this sort of thing must try your patience.
Good-night. Give your wife my congratulations.

The Lady departs so quickly that he has no time even to see her to the door

Deburau

Thank you, I will. (*Then to himself*): How absurd,
how absurd!
Another time
I swear that I'll do it in pantomime!

Justine

Oh, she's off!

Bertrand

What, has she gone?

Deburau (*to himself*)

But she wasn't . . .

Clara

And you've let her go!

Deburau

Well . . . she wasn't the one . . .
And there always is one . . . just one, you know.

Robillard is heard calling as he returns.

Robillard

Deburau . . . Deburau!

Deburau

What's that?

Robillard

Deburau!

Deburau

Hullo!

Robillard arrives much out of breath, and brandishing a newspaper.

Robillard

Have you heard?

Deburau

Not a word.

Robillard

You're in luck, you are!
Look what's in the *Journal des Dêbats*.

Deburau (*seeing the heading*)

Deburau!

Robillard

Signed 'Jules Janin.'

Bertrand

I say!

Justine

Let's see.

Bertrand

My boy, this is fame.

Laurent

Is it a slating? That's a shame.

Robillard

A slating!

Deburau

Why should he slate me, I'd like to know?

Robillard (*to Laurent*)

You need not worry anyway,
Your name's not in it,
(*To Laplace*)
Nor yours; nor mine.

Justine

Gaspard, read it aloud this minute!

Laurent

Don't ask him that.

Deburau

No, reading aloud
Isn't my line.

I'm not even proud
Of my powers of speech. Now, if I could give it you in dumb show!
You read it, friend Laurent; you'll make it sound fine.

Laurent

With pleasure.

Deburau

Now I call
That kind. The floor is yours.

Bertrand

Attention all.

Laurent

"Deburau is the greatest actor of our time; for he has revolutionized the actor's art, given us a new Pierrot and another sort of pantomime. Without a word spoken, with never a violent action, with hardly a change of expression, yet with nothing left unfelt or unsaid, with every meaning and emotion flashed clear upon our minds—here is an actor who could play you all the parts in Molière without ever opening his mouth. How

is it done? Go to the Follies Theatre and discover if you can.

"Whatever else you have to do, go to the Follies Theatre. If you have nothing else to do, go to the Follies and see Deburau.

"And you need go to no other. For in him you find a thousand actors in one. A thousand actors with their thousand countenances, their thousand twists and turns, flashes of merriment, dashes of tears, the power of their passion as it ebbs and flows. The sunshine of this art puts every other theatre in the shade. These thousand actors have but one name—Deburau."

There's a lot more like this.

The listening actors—all but Robillard—look very blank indeed.

Laplace

Well!

Justine

Wonderful!

Laurent

What a notice!

Bertrand

That ought to fill
The house to-morrow.

The Barker (to himself)

Look at them swallowing the pill!

Clara

Jules Janin, indeed!

Robillard

Well, he knows what he's talking about.

Madame Rébard

He does.

Bertrand

We shall sell out to-morrow, we shall certainly sell out.

Robillard

(to Deburau who stands distressed a little apart)
What's the matter?

Deburau

Oh, can't you feel it in the air
How they hate it?

Robillard

Let them!

Deburau

But how they hate me! Look
at them there.
I'll just explain that I never intended . . .
If I'd thought for a moment there was that in
it . . .
I was so thankful when it ended.

(*He turns to the others.*)

I really do give you my word
It was the first I'd heard of that.
And honestly . . . well, it's a little absurd!

Laplace

I don't find it so for a minute.

Deburau

No, not of the theatre, of all of us,
But absurd, written only of me.

Robillard

I don't agree.

Bertrand

I don't agree!

Laurent

Tell me . . .

Deburau

Yes?

Laurent

Do you know him?

Deburau

Who?

Laplace

This—what's his name—who makes such a fuss
Of your acting, is he a friend of yours?

Deburau

Oh, I see what you're getting at!
A personal friend of mine? Of course.

Laurent

Then, that explains it!

Laplace

Excuses it, too!

Robillard (to Deburau)

You know Janin?

Deburau

Never met the man.

Robillard

Then what the devil——?

Deburau

No, no, no!
Let them go on thinking so.
Then perhaps they'll hate me less;
A little less.
Did you see their faces while he was reading it?

Robillard

Jealousy! What's the use of heeding it?
Think what a notice from Janin means?

Deburau

Scenes,
Like this!

Robillard

Well, my friend, that's the price of success.

Deburau

Then I can't pay it. Does that sound absurd?
But I can't endure being looked at so.
It makes me too wretched, indeed it does.
All I want, you know,
Is to be met with a smile, a kind word,
And to feel I give the public pleasure.
That's how I measure
My success. And the rest I'm content to lose.
I don't hunger to be admired.
I could never be a hero.
I'm just a poor Pierrot,
Rather sad, and sometimes so tired.
I must make up my mind to be jolly at night,
As I make up my face, black and white.

Madame Rébard draws him aside.

Madame Rébard

Gaspard.

Deburau

Yes?

Madame Rébard

I'm off, but tell me, will you—

When they are out of hearing . . .

Come out to supper, just us two.

Deburau

Us two?

Madame Rébard

Don't you want to?

Deburau

I'd like it of all things, but let me explain . . .

He has begun to feel in his pockets.

Madame Rébard

I knew it! Out comes his wife's picture again!
Good-night.

Deburau

But what did you——?

Madame Rébard

Nothing, nothing at all.

Deburau

Nor did I!
So don't be offended. And thanks for the roses.

Madame Rébard

What roses?

Deburau

Didn't you send them?

Madame Rébard

Not I.

Good-night.

Madame Rébard goes.

Deburau

Now, why,
When I show them these do they all cock their noses?

Bertrand (*in an important voice*)

Deburau!

Deburau

Monsieur Bertrand!

Bertrand

I feel
That I cannot allow this occasion to pass,
An occasion so—well, let me call it such an occasion,

When the critics and public, a critic of real
Distinction, a public to-night of the highest class
Have given you here such a splendid ovation.
Now comes my part
Though I seek no applause from the pit and the gallery.
Deburau,
—Don't say no!—
As a tribute to your art
I shall raise your salary.

There is general, if concealed, amazement.

Laplace

Did you hear what he said?

The Barker

One full house has turned his head!

Laurent

Are you joking?

Bertrand

Not at all.

Laurent

What next!

Laplace

Nothing, this is
about the limit!
First his friends puff him and then . . . why,
it's blackmail, damn it.

Deburau (to Robillard)

Now they'll really love me!

Robillard

But, if he chooses to do it!

Deburau

Before them all; the tactless brute!

Bertrand

Thirty francs is your present pay.
Not so bad, I must say!
Well, no one shall call me unduly thrifty,
For the future it shall be thirty-two francs fifty.

Deburau

Thanks, my dear chief.

The Barker

The guv'nor's been drinking!

Bertrand

And to-morrow we'll have a poster printed.

The Barker

Twenty years since we had that done!

Clara

Did you ever?

Laurent

What madness!

Justine

What fun!

Bertrand

It's a bit of an outlay, that's true,
But our dear little theatre mustn't be stinted.

Robillard (to Deburau)

Now what are you thinking?

Deburau

I'm marvelling at the power of the press!

Robillard

Well, don't complain.
It doesn't hurt you.

Deburau

Oh, doesn't it? Thank you, wait and see!
If he puts up my salary when I make a success,
When I next make a failure he'll feel quite free
To cut it down again.

During these last lines Clara has gone out with Bertrand while Laurent and Laplace take Justine with them. When only Deburau, Robillard, and the Barker and the Money-Taker are left a Journalist appears and asks the Barker a question.

The Barker

Monsieur Deburau, yes . . . that's him over there.

Journalist

May I venture——?

The Barker

To speak to him. Quite all right.
He won't bite!

Journalist

Monsieur Deburau!

Deburau

What can I do for you?

Journalist

I am a journalist.
My editor hopes you'll be pleased to assist
Me to place before the public an account
Of your early days . . . of your efforts to mount
The ladder of fame that you're now at the top
of . . .
Of your first appearance . . . ?

Deburau

On the stage,
Or in the world? Well, well,
The two occasions weren't so far apart!

Journalist

Really? What stories you must have to tell!
Pardon me . . .

He makes a note.

"Trained in art
From his very cradle." That will look well
At the head of my page.

Please go on. I must squeeze out the last drop of
This great opportunity. You won't mind?

Deburau

Not a bit, if you find
It amusing.—I never did!
Trained in art from my cradle, did you say?
Well, I hadn't a cradle! But, anyway,
If you bid
Me recall these things, here goes . . .
Though I've tried hard enough to forget them,
God knows!
I was born in Rumania, at Constanza.
My father was a tight-rope dancer
Which had been his father's bent
And his grandfather's, so I've heard.
He ran a circus, owned a little tent.
My mother took the money at the door.
He was called the "Equilibrian Wonder."

Journalist

Very apt, upon my word!
Brothers and sisters?

Deburau

I had four.

Journalist

I'm making notes; please go ahead.

Deburau

Five of us then, two girls and three boys
And father made six,
And mother seven, and the pony eight.
I must count him, for he did his tricks,
Though his best trick was to pull us from town to town.
There are greater joys,
Believe me, than tramping early and late
German roads, Russian roads, Polish roads . . .!
All roads, you know, are endless.
And we were poor. Our loads
In life weren't light.
A hungry day came after an empty tent at night.
Still, I think we never felt quite friendless.
But to return! My eldest brother . . . oh, he looked down
On the rest of us. Well he might,
From the high rope he did his tricks on.
His flying leap was a great affair.
Ladies used to scream with fright.
It was fine to see him fix on

The spot that he meant to jump to.
Then, like a swallow, he'd sweep through the air
Round the trapeze and into the net.
Why, I could always feel my heart thump, too.
It means something, you know, to face death daily,
And to face it gaily,
With a smile and a bow.
So that's how I like to remember him now,
Crouched on his tight rope, supple and strong.
For later in life he went very wrong.
But you'll leave that out, won't you? It's wiped off the slate,
Although he went crooked, he always jumped straight.
My second brother was a tumbler.
That's a rôle that's rather humbler,
But an attractive little rascal.
Not a joint in his body he couldn't twist anyway.
He could dance on his hands, as I dance on my toes,
I believe if he'd tried he could have danced on his nose.
Such a genius! Such a good-for-nothing! All thrown away!
If he'd but worked instead of shirking his task all
The time, if he'd but given his talents their scope,

He could have made himself the finest human serpent in Europe.

Journalist

Excellent, just what I wanted to know!

Deburau

My eldest sister was very pretty.

(*To Robillard.*)

You remember her, don't you? She has come
Utterly to grief; but it seems as if some
Women were bound to. Such a pity!
Will you please leave that out also?
The youngest was the best thing in the show.
She danced on the slack wire really divinely,
And has married quite well.
I was the fool of the family!
Whatever went wrong it was always me.
Whoever kept balanced, I always fell.
Oh, and I have been beaten finely
For nearly—and not quite—breaking my neck.
I believe I never brought off a trick.
"Clumsy lout, clumsy lout, clumsy lout!"
And many's the dinner I've gone without

That practice on an empty tummy
(She'd bring me scraps afterwards, my poor mummy)
Might make me more imperfect still.
I used to wear pink tights.
Well . . . once they'd been pink.
But time, that provides
All things, had given some wonderful shades besides.
And they'd been so darned and put to rights
With bits of yellow and green and grey
That it was precious hard to say
Which were tights and which was mending.
But the meanest of us has his rights;
And those were my very own pink tights.
I have them still somewhere I think.
We tramped, we tramped on those roads unending
From town to town,
Laying us down
Under a hedge, or in some shed.
Cold, oh cold!
I wonder we didn't wake up dead
One of those fine mornings. Still, we were free.
The world was our tight rope. I sometimes see

In my dreams the whole world tented beneath the fold
Of the skies. And that old rope slung so high in air
That it stretches over sea and land. And, one by one,
Their figures black against a shining sun,
My father, my brothers, my sisters, all silently, solemnly passing there.
That's all there is to tell you, every particle.

Journalist

My dear sir, it will make a first rate article.

Deburau

Good-night.

Journalist

Good-night.
And thank you.

Robillard

Good-night.

The Journalist, very well satisfied, departs.

Robillard

They have all gone.

Deburau

Well, come.

Robillard

Dear fellow, why do you look so glum?

Deburau

Do I?

Robillard

Smile.

Deburau

At what?

Robillard

After to-night!

Deburau

Well, there's a smile for you. Is that all right?

Robillard

Quite right.
Now a grateful one for your own good luck . . .
One for the future.

Deburau

Ah, the many smiles
My past still owes me . . . and the debt's not paid . . .

For those first fifteen years
Of such childish trials.
But they burn deep when one salts the wounds with tears.
For the next fifteen, climbing out of the ruck
Of neglect and misfortune . . . ! Ah, I mean that my boy
Shall have his own childhood's joy and my childhood's joy
Both. Such a fine little fellow, solemn and staid!
He has my eyes and my voice
And already my way with his hand,
You know!
Swinging the left hand . . . so!

Robillard

You, running into a second edition.

Deburau

Yes but I've planned
Many revisions of it for him.
It's not such an unselfish vision.
For by filling his happiness to the brim
The overflow will be mine, you see,
And he . . .

A lady has come in and asked a question of the Barker, who nods to her to wait and then comes down to Deburau.

The Barker

Deburau!

Deburau

What?

The Barker

A lady.

Deburau

Oh!

The Barker

She's the right sort and she wants a word.

Deburau

Another! This really is too absurd.

Robillard

I'm off.

Deburau

Confound you, no!

The Barker

She's a beauty!

Deburau

What do I care?

Robillard

But she's waiting there.

Deburau

Let her wait!

The Barker

Take a look.

Deburau looks and sees—not exactly a lady perhaps, but a girl, very young, grave but smiling. She is pale, she has great deep eyes. She is dressed wholly in black. On her neck, in her ears, on her wrists there is the glitter of diamonds. Deburau is struck dumb as he looks at her. She is so charming.

Oh, but she's—(*he pauses*)

Robillard

Yes, what's the word?

Deburau

Entrancing.

Robillard

I should fetch out that picture from your pocket-book.

And as a matter of fact, from sheer instinct he has. He looks at it for a moment, and then again at the lady. Then he holds out his hand in a good-night to Robillard.

Deburau

What picture? Oh! You did say
You *weren't* going my way?

Robillard

I did say so. Good-night.

Robillard bows slightly to the unknown lady and departs. Deburau goes towards her.

Deburau

So good of you to . . .

She never speaks, but still smiles at him with that slow, entrancing smile. He offers

her his arm which she takes and they are going when . . .

The Door-Keeper (*holding out the flowers*)

Your roses!

Deburau (*taking them, says to the lady*)

Your roses. Am I right?

The lady, still smiling, shakes her head.

Deburau

No? Well, I shan't have to be chancing
Any more guesses. But, who the deuce . . . ?
People will do these things, one can't prevent 'em.
Here, now, they might be of some use . . .

And with careless generosity he holds them out to the little money-taker.

The Money-Taker

To *me?*

Deburau

To you!

He presents them to her with a bow. Then he and the lady depart.

The Money-Taker

Oh, Amedée, he . . . !

The Barker

Boo hoo!

I told you he'd never guess *you* sent 'em.

THE SECOND ACT

THE SECOND ACT

The curtain rises on Marie Duplessis' boudoir. She is at her piano, playing idly, while Deburau talks as if he were in a dream.

Deburau

There it is, there it is, and it has always been so. Why did I never see it before?

Marie

Darling, what are you muttering about?

Deburau

I'm telling myself how happy I am.

Marie

(*with a little smile.*)

Telling *yourself* . . . how happy you are!

Deburau

Yes.

Marie

Well, that's good.

Deburau

A prisoner, you know,
Set free on a sudden can only shout
That he's free . . . and find nothing else to say.
So now I cram
All the emotions that possess me
Into "I'm happy." At last I've discovered
Why one fine day,
Long ago, I was hurled
Into this quaint world.
Nobody ever told me why.
I've been guessing and guessing ever since
And what is the use of life unless we
Know that one thing, unless Fate has uncovered
Our destiny.
But now that I know . . . why, how simple it all is!
I was born
To love you, my dear.
Yes, from morning till evening and eve to morn
To fall deeper and deeper in love with you.
And to think that no one could tell me that!

I shouldn't have been so hard to convince.
Think of the time I've so cautiously wasted
In follies!
Looking for . . . what? . . .
When love was there!
Caring for . . . who? . . .
When you were near!
And this has lasted
Half my life.
For twenty years I've been running away
From women. I was afraid . . .

Marie

Of your wife?

Deburau

Not a bit; nor of them! But just,
I think, of being unhappy. I meant
Never to run a single risk.
Nothing riskier than that!
Still I've been loved. I suppose one must
Call it love;
That steady solid domestic affection
Which moves like the clock's hands round the disc
Day by day.

It's like a mackintosh over your arm.
And I was the man who never went
Out without one, because he could prove
Though there wasn't a cloud in any direction
That some day it was bound to rain.
Or, . . . there I sat,
By my fireside, safe from harm,
Blind to life, deaf to life, dumb;
Waiting for old age to come.
Why are things that are comforts when life goes wrong
Such a dreadful bore while life goes right?
That's very naughty of Nature, isn't it?
Hypocrite!
I wanted to hear the word passed among
My friends: "What a faithful fellow he is!"
Then came the sight
Of you. And now, if you please,
On me, love's pauper and life's coward,
All the wealth of the world has been showered.
Oh, my heart's—my untaught heart's—desire
All the wealth of the world? And yet
Day by day the pile grows higher.
And the more I spend, the richer I grow
The more I give, the more I get!

What's to happen I don't know,
If this goes on?
For I can't grow any happier.
There's nothing now that doesn't delight me,
The commonest things appear
Beautiful. Food and wine and books
And furniture. A coster's barrow in the street.
They're so alive, they excite me!
It's wonderful to sit in the sun.
And when the sun has gone,
And the rain's begun,
How wonderful the rain looks.
Nothing I meet
Here on earth, or shall below,
If that's where I go;
Or in heaven above
If you lift me there, but I know how to love
Loving you my sweet.

He is sitting by her now.

May I come close to you?
Now, come close to me.
Now I'll come a little closer still.
I warn you I'm going to say
Things perhaps that I didn't ought to!

Marie

Then, perhaps, you had better keep further away.

Deburau

Oh, not that sort of things, the things you've been
taught to
Expect. And I'm not going to pose to you
Silly riddles about the past.
You're a woman, you're a mystery;
Well, stay so still.
For me, while I hold the present fast,
Or if I may only sit beside you,
Sit and look and look,
That's enough.
Things that are the very stuff
Of life . . . one should look them through and
through,
So quickly they pass.
Think what a fool if I never took
My chance to tear the veils that hide you . . .
That hide . . . *you!*
Others have praised you without ever knowing
What they were praising.
Such a beautiful face!
Such a pretty hand!

But before I praise, I must understand.
Look at me; I'm your glass.
Your face is like music.
Smile. That's the melody.
See it growing
Till each feature, from its place,
Catches the phrasing,
Completes the harmony.
Your neck! I've been told it's classic.
What do they mean by that, I wonder?
What *I* want to know
Is how you can turn it so . . . just *so*.
I could sit and ponder
For hours about that. I understand it
About as much as one understands
A miracle.
Now, give me your hands.
A hand, four fingers and a thumb!
An impossible thing as Nature has planned it.
Lift your hands. Tell me to come.
Tell me to go. To wake . . . to repose.
I can't do that. I talk prose
With my hands. Yours are lyrical!

She is talking thus to him with her hands when the clock strikes five.

Marie

D'you know the time?

Deburau

I think it must be kissing time.
Did the clock strike that?
If not it struck wrong.

Marie

Sh! Some one at the door. Come in.

The Maid enters.

Maid

Madame Rabouin.

Marie

I'll not keep her long.

The Maid goes out again.

Deburau

Who's that?

Marie

Old Mother Rabouin. You know her.

Deburau

Not I!

Marie

Why, where have you been
Not to know Madame Rabouin:

Deburau

Why
Should I know Madame Rabouin?

Marie

She goes about selling
All sorts of things you don't find in shop-windows.

Deburau

I see. And telling
Innocent people the way that the wind blows!

Marie

She sells silks and shawls and ribbons and lace,
Gloves for your hands and masks for your face,
Soaps and scents and powders and creams,
Sachets to put under your pillow at night
Made to bring you beautiful dreams.

Deburau

H'm . . . a pretty large pack she must carry,
And a pretty thick broomstick she rides.

Marie

Oh, yes . . . she tells fortunes besides.

Deburau

I thought as much.

Marie

Looks at your hand and into the cards.
Will you try?

Deburau

No, I won't. Let her seek her quarry
Elsewhere for me.

Marie

She can tell you your past.

Deburau

Thank you, I know it.

Marie

Your future.

Deburau

Not she!
I've shouldered my fate and I'm marching along with it.

What . . . let an old woman destroy with a touch
All that my wonderful future guards?
I've a *wonderful* future . . . if nothing goes wrong with it.

Marie

Don't you want to know if it will?

Deburau

Not a bit.

Marie

Still,
You could ask her one question you've never asked me.

Deburau

What can that be?

Marie

You could ask her my name.

Deburau

That's true. I've never asked you what your name is.

Marie

Tact has it been . . . or don't you care?
Some day, perhaps, you may need to know.
And then you mustn't say the blame
Is mine.

Deburau

Would you like to tell me? It's all the same!

Marie

How can you talk about me else?

Deburau

I never do. D'you think I'd share
A thought of you with anyone?

Marie

Not in your own thoughts . . . ?

Deburau

Ah yes!

Marie

Well, there?

Deburau

There is a name I give you then . . . a sort of a name . . .

Marie

Tell me, tell me. Oh, what fun!

Deburau

A name is a true name if it tells,
Conjures up in its very sound
The very picture, complete in its frame
Of its owner. What do you think I found
For a name to think of you by?
My lady with the Camellia.

Marie

Why?

Deburau

Because I shall always see you
As first I saw you stand
With the flickering light about you
And that flower in your hand.

Marie

Yes, it is my flower,
I always have one near me.

Deburau

From that time that was your name for me.
Well, now, what's the other . . . everybody's
name for you?

Marie

Marie Duplessis.

Deburau

Mine's the better of the two.

Marie

I agree
So please give it me
For my very own.

Deburau

Will you keep it safely, for I've grown
Very fond of it?

Marie

For such a long time
I've wanted a name that was really my own.
One that couldn't be stolen or copied,
One that men couldn't make vulgar or stupid,
That couldn't be tagged to a rhyme.
So now, for ever and ever amen . . .
You say amen since you're down on your knee . . .
The Lady with the Camellia, that shall be me!
What are you waiting down there for?

Deburau

This.
The end of a baptism's marked with a kiss.

Marie leans towards him to be kissed.

Marie

Godfather!

Deburau

Kissing her very gently.

Goddaughter! my dear!

Marie

Till this evening.

Deburau

Will you call for me then?

Marie

At the theatre? Perhaps.

Deburau

Oh, my dear, oh, my dear!
What a new thing my life is since you entered in it,
Child that you are! Child that *I* am, I can't bear
To let you out of my sight for a minute.

I must look in at home, though
I haven't been there for a week or more.

Marie

You'll hear of it.

Deburau

What do I care?

Marie

So will the rest of the world!

Deburau

She won't dare!
But I must go back and see the boy.
He misses me so.

Marie

Someone else you adore!

Deburau

So would you. Who could help it, the rascal?

He shows her a little picture in his pocket-book.

I carry his picture now.

Marie

Very like you.

Deburau

Is he, d'you think?
Listen now.
Suppose, one day. . . No, what's the use?

Marie

Go on. I'll "suppose" if you tell me how.

Deburau

Well, since you can't answer why not ask all
The same? And besides . . . who knows!
And besides that, it's wonderful just to ask you.
Will you marry me?

Marie

Marry you!

Deburau

Don't refuse
On the spur of the moment. Let's stand on the brink
And peep over. We can't jump in.
But if I asked you to be mine,

For ever . . . for ever and a day,
If our road were straight instead of askew,
What would you say?

Marie

Well, I suppose . . .

Deburau

Stop, stop! If I let you begin
To speak you'll say "No."
Now, I can't ask you . . . remember I can't
So . . . nod your head.
Then you'll not have said
"Yes." And I'll not have heard you say "No."

She nods her head.

Deburau

Oh, divine!
To have you and hold you all for my own!
That's what I want, oh, that's what I want!

Marie

Gently, gently! Pierrot has grown
Too like Pierrot.
We're not living in Fairyland, you know.

Deburau

But would you stay there
With me, if I could find out the way there?
Ask your old witch. Let her see
If she can't find a future worth having for me.

Marie

Oh, yes, yes! (*she calls*) Madame Rabouin!

Madame Rabouin

In the next room.

Here!

Marie

Come in.

Madame Rabouin appears.

Madame Rabouin

Good afternoon.

Deburau

Madame!

Marie

My friend here
Has heard me talk so much about you.

Deburau

You tell fortunes?

Madame Rabouin

I do. A palm
I can read as you read books.

Deburau

Will you turn over the leaves of mine?
And then no doubt you
Will find something . . .

Madame Rabouin

Sit down.
Both hands. Hold them so.

Deburau

I am quite ready and quite calm.

Madame Rabouin

Ho!

Deburau

Ah?

Madame Rabouin

Can you face the truth?

Deburau

No.

Madame Rabouin

Better to face it, if Fortune looks
On you with a frown.

Deburau

Thanks, I decline.
Good-evening.

Marie

Do listen.

Deburau

No need.
Her very first "Ho" was enough for me.
I'll take my troubles as they come,
They'll come soon enough.

Madame Rabouin

Won't you give heed
To a little advice as to how to avoid them?

Deburau

Won't you please let me be?

Madame Rabouin

There they are written large on your palm.

Deburau

Will you be quiet?

Madame Rabouin

It's a friendly warning I'm offering you.

Deburau

Here's a friendly warning I'll offer you!
I'll be sorry to see you come to harm,
But if you can't hold your tongue,
I see no way but to give you a diet
Of handkerchief thrust in your mouth as a gag!
D'you hear?

Madame Rabouin

Quite plainly.

Deburau

Suddenly losing his temper.

You hag!
You bird of ill omen!
D'you want your neck wrung?
No need to look at your claw
To tell what you are.

And you show men
Your future—and I tell you it's not to your profit—
I can trace
It like your past
Both written fast
In the lines of your face.
Oh, I promise you that I don't like the look of it.
Allow me to tell you you're an impostor.
Palmistry!
All that you do is to dig from your history—
Your own wicked history of vice and ill-luck—
All the wrongs that have stuck
In your throat, all the ill-will that you foster.
Loose them on us, will you? We are to pay?
We're to be tripped up, dancing to your tune?
Doubled, redoubled they'll fall back upon you,
Till you're choked with your spite,
Till you die in a ditch and the devil has won you.
And now, my good madam, I've told you *your* fortune.
So, good-day.

Then to Marie.

My dear, till to-night.

Deburau bows to Madame Rabouin, throws a kiss to Marie, and goes.

Madame Rabouin

What a remarkably interesting man!

Marie

He's full of nerves . . .

Madame Rabouin

But so full of charm!
I'm sorry he's coming to grief.

Marie

To grief?

Madame Rabouin

Written indelibly in his palm.
Poor fellow! Let's talk of pleasanter subjects.
I came today with a wonderful plan
To put before you.

Marie

Oh, what is it?

Madame Rabouin

First,
May I be very unpleasantly candid?

Marie

Of course.

Madame Rabouin

You won't like it.

Marie

Never mind.

Madame Rabouin

Not but what it'll be a relief
To me to speak my mind.
This is the worst
Of having a conscience that objects
To seeing one's friends make fatal errors.
You may want to treat me as that good man did,
But later you'll thank me for this visit.

Marie

Oh, please go on. I'm very curious.

Madame Rabouin

First, then, my dear,
This sort of thing leads to no good.
No matter how much in love one is
There are limits . . .

Marie

Oh, please look over that.
He lost his temper, and all the terrors

You conjured up only made him more furious.
He'd say he was sorry if he were still here.

Madame Rabouin

No doubt he would!
No doubt he's a very charming fellow,
He must be to have wormed his way,
And to have such a hold upon your little heart.

Marie

Listen; I'd like to tell you this.
You think I'm madly in love with him.

Madame Rabouin

He thinks so.

Marie

Does it follow
That he's right? I have learnt
How to make men think so.

Madame Rabouin

Do you mean to say
You're *not* in love with him?

Marie

No. That's over.

Madame Rabouin

Is it, indeed!

Marie

One night at the theatre I was alone . . .
All alone and a little lonely.
Ah, no, it didn't start
As a whim.

Madame Rabouin

You *did* love him.

Marie

Oh, for a little it burnt
Me up like a flame. I felt sure, quite sure
That I never should change. Then I seemed to recover
After a little.

Madame Rabouin

So it's gone?

Marie

Quite gone.

Madame Rabouin

Then d'you think that you need
Have him here quite so much? For completing the cure

It is rather a freak
To have him pay calls on you lasting a week.

Marie

I know, I know! If only
I knew what else to do, or what to say!
But he's happy; so happy in thinking I love him
And I haven't the heart to send him away.
I know it's wrong,
I know it's foolish. But, you see,
Loving has mattered so little to me,
And to him it seems to mean so much.

Madame Rabouin

Well, how long
Is this going on for?

Marie

Something may move him
To leave me of his own accord.

Madame Rabouin

Good lord!
In about a hundred years it may.
My pretty, this sort of thing doesn't pay:

Marie

Pay? Oh, of course, I'm in the clutch
Of that beautiful word.
D'you know that I'm not twenty yet?
Girls of my age are still at school.
But the only lesson I've learnt quite pat
Is how to say to a fool
Of a man "I love you" without meaning a word of it.
Sometimes I'm tired of it.
At least he *wants* it to be true,
He believes it. How absurd!
He believes me. I should hate
Him not to believe me.

Madame Rabouin

I'm thinking of *you*,
My dear, and your future. Has he got any money?

Marie

Of course not.

Madame Rabouin

Well, whose estate
Does he think all this is provided from?

Marie

He doesn't think of it.

Madame Rabouin

Innocent baby!

Marie

He is, he is!

Madame Rabouin

Well, that's as may be
If I'd have known that things had come
To such a funny
Pass as this,
I'd have thought it amiss
To tell my young friend he could try his luck.

Marie

Tell what . . . tell who?

Madame Rabouin

I don't think you know him.

Marie

What have you told him to do?

Madame Rabouin

As a matter of fact,
It was he told me he was coming to call.

I said I'd find out if you'd see him; that's all.
You needn't, of course!
But tell your maid to show him
A little courtesy, to use a little tact.
For he's not the ordinary young spark
Wanting to know you for a lark,
Though he's young enough to take a snub.
And then he's been head over ears in love with you
For—how long?—a couple of months, not less.
He talks to me of it till he's hoarse.
If he could but meet you, he says, without ceremony,
At any cost.
Not that he need count cost. That isn't the rub
With him. He's rolling in money.
Well, if you won't let him in,
So much the worse for him, poor fellow.
And you'll never know what you've lost.
And, if you must stick to this charity business,
I've no doubt that in time things will improve with you.

Marie

I may have seen him somewhere.
Is he dark, or fair?

Madame Rabouin

Well, his hair isn't yellow
And it isn't black.
He's as handsome as sin,
And he's none of your imitation men,
Nothing to smack of the actor in him.
He lives in this world and not half in the moon;
Lives very comfortably, what's more.
Well, again;
All he has—he'll keep nothing back—
Can be thrown at your feet.
Come now, don't sit there looking so prim:
Here's a man who's prepared to adore
You. Handsome, rich, very rich.

Marie

I know, I know!
But please don't keep on saying so.

Madame Rabouin

There's the bell!
What hour is it?

Marie

It's . . . ?

Madame Rabouin

He'll be here soon.
A quarter past. That's him. I'm off!

Marie

No, no . . . please stay.

Madame Rabouin

I'll come to-morrow and you
shall tell
Me what happens.

Marie

Yes, do.

Madame Rabouin

One thing more.
Let's look at your palm.
That's queer!
People scoff;
But I'll swear
That little star—see it!—was not there before.
Till to-morrow. Keep calm.

The Maid brings Marie a card which she in turn shows to Madame Rabouin.

Marie

Is it he?

Madame Rabouin

Yes. Look, you can see him from here.

Marie

Why, he is dark. Fancy your not knowing!

Madame Rabouin

It only shows how old my eyes are growing.

Marie (*to the Maid*)

Ask him in.

(*To Madame Rabouin*) Thank you.

Madame Rabouin

Till to-morrow, my dear.

Madame Rabouin goes off with the maid. After a moment the Young Man appears. He and Marie stand looking at each other for a few seconds. Then, like an arrow, as she sinks into a chair, he flings himself across the stage and at her feet.

Young Man

Where shall I find the words in which to tell you
All that it means to be here at your feet?
No worth or wealth of mine that can compel you
To squander on me from your store complete
Of beauty and of tenderness one glance!
But let your pity give me countenance.

Pity me for the little that I have
To bring you; but your love can make it more.
My only freedom is to be your slave,
My only wisdom left, the leaf I tore
Out of love's book; its content magical
"I love you" and "I love you." That is all.
You see I've nothing new to say.
The thoughts are trite, the words are old.
Why should I wonder they leave you cold?
Can I complain if you send me away?

Marie

But words of love sound always new and real
When the voice speaking them is real . . . and new.
You need not climb poetic heights to steal
Eloquence, if the simple thing sounds true.

And, simpler still, when words of love won't
come
To better "Love is blind" with "Love is dumb."

If I know that you love me
What more need I know?
Why, your eyes show me more
Than your tongue ever can show.
How your eyes shine!
They are traps
That have caught mine.
I looked too close,
But I think, perhaps,
We often lose
Beauty in life because we shrink
From looking at things close enough.
We should look them through and through when
they are the very stuff
Of life . . . don't you think?
What's amiss?

Young Man

Nothing. But I can't speak.
Oh, the stuff of your very dress
Seems to have life in it!

Marie

Touch with your hand
The tip of my ribbon . . . no, not with your lips!
That, I shall feel for sure.
Very well, lay it against your cheek.
Yes, a current indefinite
Of pain, of joy, somehow slips
Its way to my heart.

Young Man

Oh, my heart!
You can't send me away now? I can't endure
To be sent away.

Marie

I understand,
Well . . . for a little, stay.

At this moment Deburau appears. He is leading his little son, Charles, by the hand. He carries a little dog and a bird's cage with a bird in it. At the sight of them he drops the cage. Marie and the young man turn around.

Deburau

Please don't move. I was just going,
As you see.

I didn't mean to interrupt.
But such a ridiculous thing has just happened to me.
That old Rabouin woman, who would be showing
Me danger ahead . . . I ought to have stopt
To listen. Will you listen to these
Ridiculous things . . . it won't take a minute?
When I got home my wife had been gone
Since yesterday evening, if you please.
Gone . . . yes, bolted, that's what she'd done.
Well, thank God, she'd left me the boy;
The place wasn't empty since he was in it.
But, lonely, wasn't it, sitting at home,
Charles, waiting for me to come?
She'd left me Fifi, too;
And the canary, think of that!
Well, but of course I shouted for joy.
Here was my dream coming true,
Here was the way to Fairyland clear.
What had Fate been at!
And off I ran to my dear . . . to my dear
With my boy and my bird and Fifi. Well,
Now comes the ridiculous part of the story
I have to tell.
When I found her what else should I find

But . . . ! Will you repeat this little history
To her? . . . that would be kind,
She was so beautiful, and she loved me.
But, when I found her,
Around her
Had sprung up the hedge of a strange happiness.
So I could do no less
Than turn away.
Oh, I turned at once and went away
With my boy and Fifi and my bird
I could do no less because I loved her so.
I want her to know,
And not to forget,
That I never said an angry word.
There's nothing, tell her, she need regret;
All's as well as can be.
And now all I care for
Is that whenever she thinks of me . . .
If ever, if ever she thinks of me . . .
It should be kindly. Therefore
She must remember
That the happiness she gave me,
Joys without number,
Riches of happiness,
Will suffice to save me

For a long time from distress.
But when I've spent it all and am quite poor again,
Perhaps I'll send to her, and then
Perhaps she'll come
Bringing a little alms of love.
And now, please, will you say I'm going home?
I shall be there if she needs me.
Forgive my disturbing you. Don't move.

Young Man

Who is this? What is it leads me
To think that I know him?

Marie

It's Gaspard Deburau.

Young Man

Oh, do introduce me. I've always admired him so.

Marie

Allow me.

Deburau

Oh, please! Well, if you say I shall . . .

Marie

Jean Gaspard Deburau . . . Monsieur Armand Duval.

THE THIRD ACT

THE THIRD ACT

At Deburau's. It is almost an attic. Deburau and Charles (who is now seventeen) are finishing their lunch. In a vase are some camellias.

Charles

Try one of these.

Deburau

Nothing more, thank you. Help yourself.

Charles

Nothing at all is what you've eaten!

Deburau

I've no appetite.

Charles

Try. Don't be beaten.
Have a pear? Half?
Please.

Deburau shakes his head. There is a slight pause.

Deburau

Did you ask again downstairs,
Has anyone been for me?

Charles

No one.

Deburau

You're sure.

Charles

Quite sure.

Deburau

No one!

Charles

Not a soul.

I ask every day, and twice a day.
Who is it that you sometimes say
You've been waiting for these seven years?

Deburau

That's an old joke, too old to explain.
There's the bell.

Charles

Yes, for the second floor.
I know the sound of every one
Would you like me to go and ask again?

Deburau

You speak as if it were you spent your whole
Time in listening! I'm sorry. Just go to the door.
For think, if she came—
If she—or he—were to come and ring
And no one answered! What a thing
To happen! And then if he went—or she went
away . . . !
So go all the same.

Charles goes, listens, and returns.

Charles

No one, I thought not.
Now, seriously, father, how are you to-day?

Deburau

Not well.

Charles

I know.

Deburau

My breathing is so—so . . .

Charles

And your head's hot.
May I send for a doctor?

Deburau

What can he say or do?

Charles

At least he might make you eat.
Would it hurt you to go out for a little?
Two months since you set your foot in the street.

Deburau

I'm not to be cured by doctor or hospital.

Charles

Father, don't say so!

Deburau

Why not, if it's true?

Charles

You should never have given up acting.
It all dates from then.

Deburau

What! go back again . . . ?

Charles

They'd ring bells if you did.

Deburau

And a precious cracked ring
It would be for me!

Charles

Try it and see.

Deburau

. . . Pull faces
To amuse a set of loons,
Who forget you as soon as your place is
Filled up by duller and damn'der buffoons!

Charles

Give them their due!
When have you found them faithless to you?

Deburau

Oh, to sit and think of past successes
Is like—what's it like?—picking over a rag-bag
Full of the faded gaudy dresses
One used to wear.
Every old hag
Was beautiful once she'll swear.
I'm humbler than most.
I only boast
To have been once a rather popular clown.

Charles

What's worth having but success?

Deburau

My boy, prick a vein in your arm and write this
down
In your blood. Love's worth having. Unless
You can mix love with your drink of life
You'll go parched, no matter how heady
And glorious your wine of success and of fame is.
When your love comes be ready,
Seize her and hold her, love her madly.
It hurts to love madly. But, though the game is
Cruel, you must play it out to the finish.
It's a worse hurt to sit and sadly
Count the lost moments; the strife
Unstriven; the swinish
Wallowing lethargy in the sty
Of failure. Oh, yes, I exaggerate.
But, at any rate,
Have a try to live. Have a try!
But you don't need advice from me.

Charles

Why do you say that?

Deburau

Who is it you run off to see . . . ?

Charles

I?

Deburau

Yes, you!
Every day as it gets near two
I see you with your eye on the clock.
Silly boy, what are you blushing at?
Where do you go to?

Charles

The theatre.

Deburau

What theatre?

Charles

The Follies.

Deburau

Oh, is *that* where you meet her? Who is she?
Would you rather not say?

Charles

There's no one at all. I go to see the play.

Deburau

To see the play! Do you like seeing plays?

Charles (fervently)

Oh, yes!

Deburau

This is a bit of a shock.
I suppose you're not thinking, one of these days,
Of becoming . . .

Charles

An actor? I want to be.

Deburau

Do you, indeed! Well, you might have told me
Before. Am I the sort of man who bullies
His children?

Charles

Let me work hard for a year.
Give me a chance; I'll work so hard.
For two years? Then, perhaps, I could show you . . .

Deburau

Do you really think one can learn to act?

Charles

Well, one can try.

Deburau

Oh, there's nothing to stop you trying,
There's nothing to stop a pig from flying,
If it has wings. My boy, this is sheer
Folly! What sort of parts do you regard
As likely to . . . well?

Charles

Parts you used to play.

Deburau

Parts that I . . . !
Really, you flatter me; really, I owe you
Thanks for such an effort at tact.

Charles

Oh, of course, not ever, in the way
You used to play them.
Though if you'd show me a thing or two . . .

Deburau

A trick or two!
Of course that is all my acting is . . . or
was! . . .

A few tricks I stole from . . . never mind who!
Now, in my turn, I'm to betray them
To you!

Charles

I don't think so at all.

Deburau

Because
You've seen me do it easily,
How very easy it must be!
Why should you think you can act at all?

Charles

I'm still young . . .

Deburau

Very!
That's at least a fault that time will cure.

Charles

Doesn't that give me rather a pull?

Deburau

Over *me?*

Charles

I'm sorry
You should think I meant that.

Deburau

Don't be so sure
I'm done with.

Charles

Of course you're not.

Deburau

There's enough left in me perhaps to blot
For a little the sun of your rising fame.

Charles

Papa, it's a shame
To make jokes like that.

Deburau

Now, listen to me.
You're not quite such a fool as you're trying to be.
You think you can act. Well, take my advice—
For remember at this game no one fails twice—
Try something easy. You can learn to spout
And as long as you've words to help you out . . .

Charles

No.
I think I'll do better, like you, in dumb show.

Deburau

As Pierrot?

Charles

Why not, why ever not, I'd like to know?
I can move, I can dance,
I'm as light on my feet as a fly,
I can try, I can but try.

Deburau

Very well, try.
No doubt we can get you a chance
In some little place in the provinces.

Charles

No. I think not. When one commences
That way one may finish that way, too.
Better start in Paris.

Deburau

No doubt that is the thing to do.
What name will you play under?

Charles

What name!

Deburau

There are lots to be found.
The chief thing about which to take care is
That it looks well in print.
It should also have an attractive sound.
And be easy to remember. It should give one a hint
Of something familiar.

Charles

Why not my own name?

Deburau

What may that be?

Charles

Deburau.

Deburau

That happens to be mine, you see.
Your name is Charles.

Charles

Charles Deburau.

Deburau

Oh no . . . oh no!
Make a fool of yourself, my lad, if you must . . .
Of yourself, if you please.

But you don't go dragging my name in the dust.
My name!
Why, what is that, I should like to know,
But another self, a second Deburau,
That I've built up, piece by piece,
Sweated and suffered to create it
And now you want to appropriate it.
Do the same
For yourself, my lad,
If you're such a genius.
Not a bad
Idea; in fact, most ingenious,
To slip into my shoes.
But it happens I don't choose
That you should. And don't you try it.
My name! The wealth of the world shan't buy it.
I'm down, out, and done for, you think.
While you're on the brink
Of success.
None the less,
While I've a breath in my body, I swear
You don't play *my* parts in *my* name, so there!

Charles

Then I must wait.

Deburau

Till I can't prevent it?

Charles

I didn't mean that.

Deburau

Never mind if you meant it
Or not. You mayn't have long to wait.

Charles

Papa, I never meant to say it.

Deburau

That's why it sounded so well.
The very best effects are sometimes made that way.
You're quite cut out for parts that need no feeling.
I much regret the slight delay.
But be patient. There's no telling.
By to-morrow or next day
You may be quite free to go your way
And try what sort of trade the actor's is. Well, my dear boy,
I wish you joy!

Charles

It has served you well enough.

Deburau

Oh, yes! Although I've had some rather tough
Times you've not known about. Do you remember . . .
(Oh, this is nothing) . . . but one damp December
I had to bring my manager before a magistrate
For giving me a dressing-room in such a filthy state
That I nearly died of it? But I won my case
By showing there in Court, before his face,
A dozen mushrooms that I'd picked the night before
From the dressing-room floor.
A hard life!
And a shrewish wife,
The art of acting is to wed.
Unless you can really take delight
In the neglect and jealousy and spite,
Which are its daily bread.

Charles

You haven't always felt like this about it.
Oh! the first nights I recollect
When I sat up till you came home.

If the play had gone well you'd always affect
A little indifference, you'd smile and say,
"I didn't do badly; but I haven't a doubt it
Will be a failure. That's always the way.
Wait till the papers come!"
I suppose if you hadn't observed that rite
You wouldn't have slept a wink that night.
Then in the morning when the papers came
And we looked through them till we found your name
Always a shout when we found your name!
Then out to lunch you'd go
Looking so smart.
"When I've made a success," you'd say,
"I can count on a week's invitations to lunch."
I'd often try
To pass the café by
And peep on the sly
To where they all stood around you in a bunch,
Praising you . . . praising your art.
You were happy then, I know.
You tell me now of neglect and spite.
Think of that night
When the whole audience stood and shouted your name

Till you came.
And when you came they brought the house down.
Did you feel then you were only a clown?
And you'd ask my advice . . .

Deburau

Your advice!

Charles

Oh, indeed, but you would!
Whenever I'd been to the theatre you'd ask,
"How did I play to-night?"
I'd say—for I thought—it was wonderful quite
That you probably were
The greatest actor in the world.
You'd smile. But then with a spice
Of something else in your voice you'd say,
"Why probably?" Then I'd be set the task,
To pick out the tiniest fault if I could.
So, just to please you as I thought,
"At your first exit," once I said, "as you turned
Wasn't the gesture rather queer?"
Oh, but you turned on *me!* I curled
With shame. Queer! Would I kindly explain
What I meant by "queer"? I noted that down

In my child's mind; not to be caught
Ever again.
Oh, papa!
If anyone then had called you a clown:

A little pause. Deburau makes no movement; then Charles, thinking he may have fallen asleep, tiptoes towards the door.

Deburau

No, I'm not asleep. Stay where you are.

Charles

But . .

Deburau

No, this afternoon you can stay with me.

Charles

But if anyone came I could leave the key . . .

Deburau

No one will come.

A silence.

Yes, there's the sound
Of our bell-wire scraping on the wall.

There's the bell! Run into the hall
Quickly. I daren't look round.

Charles has gone out and after a moment returns with Robillard.

Charles

It's Monsieur Robillard.

Robillard

Well, old man?

Deburau

Good to see you. Sit down. Charles, bring that chair.

Robillard

Better?

Deburau

Not much.

Robillard

Cheer up.

Deburau

You seem to think that I can.

Charles

You want to talk; I'll go.

Deburau

You're all right where you were.

Charles sits apart very impatient.

Robillard

I've news.

Deburau

News?

Robillard

Most amazing.

Deburau

Of? . . . ?

Robillard

Yes.

Deburau

But . . . of whom?

Robillard

Well, you wanted to know what had become . . .

Deburau

Of my wife! I suppose I did.

Robillard

I've seen her.

Deburau

Seen her?

Robillard

Not three hours back.
I thought I never should get on her track,
But there I was, this morning, gazing
At nothing particular when she—

Deburau

Hush!

Charles has left the window to find a book and is near them.

Deburau

How are things at the Follies?

Robillard

Well, they all bid
Me bring you their love. Not as one could wish.
Week-days are bad; Sundays are better.

Charles has by this gone back to the window.

Deburau

Go on. I suppose it's as we feared;
The poor wretch has come to utter grief?

Robillard

No, she's all right.

Deburau

All right?

Robillard

Yes, she appeared
A little older, perhaps, and plumper . . .
Well, she was always plump.
But more contented. That was the chief
Thing that one noticed. I hadn't to pump her.
She wanted to tell me and so I let her.

Deburau

Well?

Robillard

Well, there she is with a man
Who keeps a big jeweller's shop.

Deburau

A shop!

Robillard

I gather he's very well-to-do.
She was charmingly dressed, not at all the frump

She used to be. It seems he's a good sort of fellow, too.

Deburau

A tradesman! Rather a drop
From what she was used to with me.

Robillard

She's all but married to him, you see,
Calls herself Madame . . .

Deburau

She's taken his name,
And given up mine?

Robillard

Well, you mustn't blame
Her for that.

Deburau

But what taste!
Here's a nice touch of irony.
I honour that creature with my name,
She flings it back at me at the very same
Moment her son is up to the felony
Of trying to steal it. Oh, but why waste

Time on a woman who, without a pang,
Lets her husband go hang!

Robillard

But had you a flood of tears ready to fall
For her loss?

Deburau

That's not the same thing at all
I never told her with my eyes full of tears
And a sob in my voice and my arms round her neck
That I'd die if she left me. But for ten solid years
She said that to me about once a week.

Robillard

I'm sure she meant it.
And she suffered then,
When the smash came.
But she couldn't prevent it,
So she picked up the pieces and started again.
Women do.

Deburau

Do men?

Robillard

Yes, why shouldn't they do the same?

Deburau

Because . . .
Listen to me; they are different laws
A man loves under. I'm sure that she meant it.
The mistake was I thought that she meant it for *me*.
But she meant it just for her husband, you see,
Whoever at the moment he happened to be.
Remember this, when I'm out of the way . . .
It's the wisest thing I shall ever say . . .
To a woman, you're something, not *somebody* ever;
When she loves you she kisses not you, but her lover.
She's true to her husband; she's not true to you.
She'd be true to a dozen, a dozen times true!
Oh, the trouble she'd take
To buy or make
The little dish I liked for supper!
"Darling, it needs a touch more pepper,
Or a little mustard to savour it."
And it was the dish she liked the best.
Now she cooks supper for him.

A different dish, but she'll still protest
It's her favourite.
Isn't it grim?
If he's ill what a nurse she'll be!
What a nurse she once made me!
"Poor Gaspard," as she'd slip the pillow
Under my head.
Now she hovers round his bed
With "Poor——" whatever she calls the fellow.
Does she ever think of the boy, I wonder?

Robillard

I'm sure she does, but under
Rather a different aspect,
I expect,
Because . . .

Deburau

Well, why that pause?

Robillard

She has two children of her own now, so to speak.
Fine little chaps, I saw them.

Deburau

Ah! a streak
Of real humour! That saves my life,

I no longer feel that I've lost my wife
But rather that I'd the honour to be
For a little time
The partner of a charming lady
Who now, in the prime,
Of a buxom maturity
Is a most delectable,
Eminently respectable
Matrimonial prop
Of a gentleman keeping a jeweller's shop.
His for eternity!
Life seems tragic sometimes, no doubt,
But it turns to comedy if you sit it out.

Robillard

Well, if that's helped to lessen
Your trouble . . .

Deburau

Oh, yes, it gives me a lesson.
She has forgotten, has she? Well, I
Have something more to forget. Shall I try?
I'm ill; but not so very ill.
I wouldn't mind being out and about
If I could only stop myself looking about
Not for her, but—you know—for *her*.

Robillard

Come to the theatre: not to play,
Just for a word with us all.

Deburau

That's the way
I should miss her if she came.

Robillard

What nonsense this is! You'll stay and fret
Here in this wretched garret until
You die of old age. And all the same
Never a step to you will she stir.
Put on your hat now and come with me.

Deburau

Not now, not now. Look, it's nearly three,
And I've always been sure that *if* she came
She'd come at three . . . no, at a quarter to.

Robillard

These fancies are very bad for you.

Deburau

There's the bell! Who can that be?

Robillard

Come, come, my dear fellow, don't get in a state.

Deburau

I know. It isn't she. Why, what's amiss?

Robillard

Well, as a matter of fact—it *is*.

For Marie Duplessis has entered

Deburau

You see! She's only five minutes late.

He tries to rise.

Marie

No, no, don't move.

Deburau

Oh, my dear!

Then to Robillard.

Take the boy with you.

Marie

Your boy?

Deburau

You remember.

Marie

How he has grown.

Deburau

There has been time.

Marie

But, what a joy
To have such a son!

Robillard (to Deburau)

He doesn't want to go.

Deburau

Why not?

Robillard

Says you told him to stay.
But if he sees me run away
He'll take in the situation.

Deburau

I fear
He has mastered it at a glance.
Never mind,
Be off. Leave him behind.

Robillard

Well, you'll look us up in a day or so.
(*To Marie.*)
Madame.

Marie

Monsieur.

Robillard

Good-bye, Charles. In a trance?

Charles

I beg your pardon. Good-bye.

Robillard

Good-bye.

Robillard goes. Charles comes to sit near his father . . . and Marie.

Marie

How old is he?

Deburau

Sixteen.

Charles

Seventeen, papa.

Marie

So much! But you grow younger.

Deburau

Yes, in him.

Marie

He is very charming.

Deburau

Be off, my lad,
Such a great fellow as you are!
It's very bad
To be lounging about the house all day.
Trot along.

Charles

Where to?

Deburau

Well, I must say!
These ducklings take too much teaching to swim!
Be off somewhere.
Run to the Follies and amuse yourself there.

Charles

To the theatre! Oh, yes . . . if I may.
Thank you! Madame, good-day.

He goes.

Marie

Charming, quite charming!

Deburau

I see that he is!

Oh, at last you are here.
I knew you'd come.
Such bliss!
But a poor place to welcome you to, my dear,
Is my home.

Marie

I'm not looking at that.

Deburau

But you can.

It's not so bad.

Marie

Camellias!

Deburau

Why, yes!
But you've none in your dress.

Marie

They seem to die now if I wear them.
But I always have them about me.
Give me those if you can spare them
For a talisman.

Deburau

Are you in danger, then?

Marie

Why should I be?
But . . . you can see a difference in me?

Deburau

Not any, to me.
And there never can be.

Marie

Oh, la, la!

Deburau

Do you doubt me?
I have changed though.

Marie

My poor friend,
Lying so ill.

Deburau

I'm not ill.

Marie

But they told me so.

Deburau

Who told you?

Marie

I'd a letter from—

Deburau

Robillard?

Marie

Yes, on Sunday.

Deburau

Oh!

Marie

What's the matter?

Deburau

It took that to bring you.
Never a thought of me when I was well.

Marie

Yes, I have thought of you very often.

Deburau

Loving me still?

Marie

Still loving you . . .
As much as ever. I meant to come one day.
A dozen times I've started
And then not been able.

Deburau

Curse them!

Marie

Who?

Deburau

How can I tell?

Marie

Why curse them?

Deburau

Because since we parted
A dozen times they've made you miserable.
Then you started to come to me.
Isn't that so?

Marie

Yes.

Deburau

You should have come.
Are you unhappy?

Marie

I have some
Unhappy times.

Deburau

Many!

Marie

Yes, many.
But since I love him I prefer to be
Unhappy.

Deburau

At last, at last, you understand!
Now we can sing love's litany
Together, hand in hand.

Marie

I can't explain why I love him so.
It's that he's . . .

Deburau

Oh, I know, I know.
Who should know if I don't know!
It's that he's a part of you,
He has the heart of you,
He *is* the heart of you.
Nothing's true if that's not true.

Marie

Why did you sing the litany to me?
I think that taught me to believe in it.

She is breaking down.

Deburau

There, there, now! Quiet a minute.
Wait; it will all come right, you'll see.

Marie

You were the first to tell me . . .

Deburau

But now you're wiser than I,
And you can take up the tale.

Now, now, you're not going to cry.
That won't avail,
Will it? Now, what's the trouble? Let's have it laid bare.
You must give me my share.

Marie

They want him to leave me for good and all.
His father wants him to marry;
He came this morning to tell me so.

Deburau

His *father* came!

Marie

The maid said, "Monsieur Duval's in the hall."
I knew she couldn't mistake the name.
Some joke of Armand's, I thought.
In walked his father.

Deburau

How dare he!

Marie

Would I please let his son go?
He put it a little crudely.

Deburau

The man should be taught
Manners.

Marie

Yes, it's behaving rather rudely
To keep your hat on your head.
And the things he said!
"Just to oblige me," he said. Did you ever
Hear anything like it?

Deburau

Mad of him.

Marie

I told him I would, just to get rid of him.

Deburau

Will you?

Marie

Never, never, never.
Oh, look at the time!

Deburau

You must go?

Marie

Yes; I'm sorry.

Deburau

Won't you stay a minute longer,
Even to talk of him?

Marie

I must hurry.

Deburau

There was no attraction stronger
I could think of.

Marie

But, listen to me.
I'm going to call from your window;
There's someone I want you to see.

Deburau

Who?

Marie

My doctor; he's waiting below.

Deburau

A doctor! What nonsense!

Marie

I've not told him your name.

Deburau

Why ever not?

Marie

Well, he sees such a lot
Of people, and chatters. . . .

Deburau

I understand.

Marie

Not that in one sense
It matters.
But, all the same,
My bringing him here . . .

Deburau

I *quite* understand.

Marie

He's a very good doctor.
He has been mine
For nearly a year.

Deburau

Are you ill?

Marie

Not a sign,
Is there, of anything wrong?
No, nothing to call
Illness. I cough a little sometimes . . . that's all.
May I beckon him up? He shan't stay long.

Deburau

Yes, yes.

Marie

That's right.
She calls from the window and beckons.
St! Doctor! (*then to Deburau again*) That's good.

Deburau

If it pleases you.

Marie

He'll work a cure. He promised he would.

Deburau

Do his medicines touch
The heartache that seizes you,
The thoughts that rend
Your memory?

Marie

Ah, my friend,
In this world one mustn't expect too much.

Deburau

And I've waited for this!

Marie

For what?

Deburau

For you to come . . . bringing your doctor!
A doctor . . . when you are here!
A doctor . . . when you are gone!
And you expect a
Wonderful cure, do you not?
My dear,
In my case the one thing clear is
That there's more salvation
In a word from you,

A look from you,
Alone,
Than a consultation
With every doctor in Paris.

Marie

There he is. I'll open the door.

Deburau

Yes, open it . . . and go.

Marie

Not for a minute . . . !

Deburau

Oh, please go,
Or you might keep *him* waiting
And that you'd never forgive me.

Marie

Not five minutes more?

Deburau

No; let in your doctor, and leave me.

Marie

You tell me you've wanted me so
And now you tell me to go!

Deburau

Hating
To tell you? No.
Give me your hand.
Listen, and try to understand.
Ah, smile at me. When I've let your hand go
I shall hold your smile fast!
Now, remember when this is past
That the less we have the less we have lost.
With life at its best I wanted you most.
Life's over,
I've loved you. Now, go to your lover.

Marie opens the door to the Doctor, says a few words to him, then does smile at Deburau and then . . . goes.

Deburau

Come in, do come in, and sit down.

Doctor

Well?

Deburau

What a lot of trouble to put you to
For a poor wretch who's not worth it.

Doctor

Never mind mine; what's your trouble?
Come, let's unearth it.
Are you in pain?
Just loosen your dressing-gown.
Thank you.

He starts to sound him.

Deburau

Not a bit! I wish I were,
It'd be something to think about.

Doctor

Breathe deeply. Thank you. Again.

Deburau

Not pneumonia, single or double?

Doctor

Neither.

Deburau

Well, I feel badly found out
I'm a fraud.

Doctor

Not at all, my dear sir.
But, to make a quite unscientific guess
At the cause of your distress
(Which sometimes serves),
I think you're suffering from what's called nerves.

Deburau

That may be so.

Doctor

Well, now, you know,
You can shake yourself free
If you choose. Get up, go about,
Order yourself a good dinner to-night.

Deburau

Will you provide the appetite?

Doctor

Seriously,
If you don't make some endeavour
To battle with this, my friend,
How will it end?
Perhaps with a dip in the river.

Deburau

That's a prescription you might write out.

Doctor

There are better ones, however.
No, not physic.
Now, tell me, are you fond of music?

Deburau

Drowning is quicker and not so noisy.

Doctor

Art?

Deburau

By art I suppose you mean
Covering canvas up with paint?
Well, I much prefer it clean.

Doctor

Nature?

Deburau

Nature makes me feel so small.
Poor man, however tall
He tries to grow, Nature outtops him.
Whatever noise he

Tries to make in the world, she's noisier,
She has no restraint.
I venture to think that the Creator
Ought by this time to have civilized Nature.

Doctor

Do you read much?

Deburau

Think of the time a man employs here
Reading books! And when death stops him
What has he read?
Better to wait until he's dead.
I have my doubts if Heaven looks
Like the pictures, full of seraphs and cherubs,
If the lion purrs when by chance he rubs
Against the lamb, though it's very pretty.
But I've always been sure the Eternal City
Would be full of books.
Think of the men of light and leading
Who've gone there! So I propose to pass eternity
In reading.

Doctor

But, for mere mortality,
What about the theatre now

Deburau

What a suggestion!

Doctor

Do you question
The prescription?
I often take a dose myself.

Deburau

No, in reality
I was only wondering how
A dose would taste to me, nasty or nice.
Will any description
Of theatre suffice?
Any bottle from the shelf?

Doctor

Any theatre may.
But I always say
That the cure does not depend on the play—
Although, of course, the play's a factor—
I usually prescribe some particular actor.

Deburau

What sort of an actor?

Doctor

Not one of the sort
That the manager calls like a cab from the rank,
Conscientiously earning his living
By painting his face and speaking his part.
But there are one or two we should humbly thank,
We physicians, though they beat us.
While we are striving
With science, which in the last resort
Is like a candle without a light,
There comes this actor with his art
His—what d'ye call it—"divine afflatus."
A bit of a blackguard he may be,
Ignorant, idle, devil-may-care,
Poverty-stricken. But since somewhere
There lurks in him that touch of the divine
Which he spends, spills as a drunkard spills wine—
But that's Nature's way, you see,
Nature's own generosity—so he,
However worthless he may seem to be,
Because he offers you his heart's blood,
Can do you good.

Deburau

And can you tell me of such an actor,
Such a man?

Doctor

Indeed I can.
There's one I know
Just such a public benefactor.
I don't hesitate to call him so.
Gaspard Deburau.
But how very few have done him justice!

Deburau

Really! In this world that's how it always is.

Doctor

A great artist, too,
See him and tell me if that's not true.

Deburau

I'll go to-night.

Doctor

That's right.
He's the doctor for you.
Wait till you begin to laugh.

Deburau

I'm smiling already, you see.

Doctor

Good. In anticipation!
There's half the battle won.

Deburau

Thanks for your visit.

Doctor

You'll have well repaid it
If you make Deburau cure you.

Deburau

And do you divide the fee?

Doctor

Ah, no, professional etiquette
Forbids that to be done.
But, my dear sir, half
A doctor's reputation
Is made by such collaboration.
Science needs all the help that she can get,
So I shall quite contentedly
Let him work the cure if I take the credit.

Charles comes back.

Deburau

Show the doctor out.

Charles takes the Doctor into the passage and then returns.

Deburau

He's right.
That's the way.
What have you been about?

Charles

I've been to the theatre. I saw . . .

Deburau

Well?

Charles

"Pierrot on the See-Saw."

Deburau

What are they playing to-night?

Charles

They're reviving "Old Clo'."

Deburau

Who plays my part?

Charles

Legrand.

Deburau

Who did you say?

Charles

Legrand.

Deburau

Does he indeed! That's a poor sort of joke.
Give me my hat, give me my cloak,
Don't stand and stare.
Run on and tell them I'll be there
And ready to start.
I fear Legrand's prospects are hardly bright.
I play to-night!

THE FOURTH ACT

THE FOURTH ACT

The interior of the Theatre again. They are playing "Old Clo'." There is a full house, but the audience is fidgety. Deburau is no longer the same actor, he seems to have lost his charm and power. He is making strenuous efforts to be amusing but without any success. He hesitates and makes one mistake after another. The audience very palpably begins to weary of him and presently a hiss is heard. From that there swells in a very few minutes a horrible noise of booing and cat-calling. Bertrand and the Barker at the back of the pit are in great consternation.

The Barker

There's a boo!

Bertrand

Hark at them!

Barker

Giving *him* the bird!

Him! Why?

Bertrand

He's past his job. He's done for.

Barker

Oh, my word!

Deburau pauses in his part and then slowly draws near the footlights. He makes an appealing gesture to the audience and silence falls.

Voices in the Audience

He's going to speak!

Listen!

Fancy his speaking!

What luck!

First time he's done it!

I always thought he was dumb!

He has got pluck.

Deburau does attempt to speak, but he cannot utter a single word. So he tells his audience by a few simple gestures that he

is ill, that he can't go on, that he has played for the last time. He asks their forgiveness; he says good-bye. By this time there is dead silence in the house. Deburau's tears are falling. He makes his last gesture, slowly, sadly kissing his hand. Suddenly the curtain falls. Without another word the audience rises, without another word they move away leaving the theatre empty.

When they are gone Bertrand appears again at the door of his office, while Laurent comes in through the pass-door. They are both horrified.

Bertrand

What a calamity; what a calamity!

Laurent

Ghastly!
And there he is in his dressing-room
Smashed. Poor fellow, oh, poor fellow!

Bertrand

What! and you've a kind word for him, have you?
We can chalk that up as his epitaph.

Laurent

A bit belated, this effort at amity,
Is it; sounds a bit hollow?
Well . . . while a man's a success
What's an enemy more or less?
They're already too many to count by half.
But when you seem tumbling to your doom,
Though a kind word can't save you,
Then it's worth the having.
And lastly,
To the man who can give it it's then worth the giving.

Bertrand

So it is, so it is.

To the Barker, who has just re-entered.

Where's to-night's poster?

The Barker

Right away, Guv'nor!

The Barker goes off to get it.

Bertrand

Laurent, you're a hero,
Most magnanimous.

But it must have been funny
To see you comforting Deburau.

Laurent

Well, someone had to.
And if you'd had any
Sense of your duty, you'd have been glad to,
Instead of standing and laughing at me.

Bertrand

Not so free, my friend, not quite so free
With your moral tropes where I'm concerned.
It's proper and pretty to lose your animus
For a fellow actor when he's in misfortune,
It costs you nothing. But what'll it cost *me*, this catastrophe?
We've to open again in an hour or so,
And, I ask you, how can we? What can we do?
What's to be played and who's to play it?
Why the devil didn't I have him turned
Out of the theatre! I'm sorry to say it.
He has had his triumphs. But this last trophy
Breaks the back of my poor old show.
It's a death blow!

And that's why, my dear Laurent, I can't quite sing to your tune.

The Barker returns carrying a large poster with Deburau's name on it, which he pins up with a sigh.

Bertrand

Well, what did they make of it?

The Barker

Who?

Bertrand

Who, by Heaven, who d'you think I mean, you booby? The audience. What had *they* to say?

The Barker

Nothing! They just walked out and away
Without a word, with nothing to say,
Sorry.

Bertrand

Sorry?

The Barker

Yes, and sad,
And enough to make 'em sad and sorry.

For they won't see him again,
Nor, you may add,
Anyone like him in a hurry.
So out they were walking into the rain . . .

Bertrand

Is it raining?

The Barker

. . . Some of their faces were wet . . .
Saying their good-bye in dumb show,
Just as Deburau had taught them to
Often he's made 'em laugh . . .

Bertrand

Once too often!

The Barker

Well, the once too often made 'em cry.
This is a day they won't forget.

Bertrand

Nor shall I!
Shall we now endeavour to soften
The blow by advertising:—
See the surprising

Comedian that makes you weep in buckets full?
That'd please the dear public; we'd soon have our pockets full!

The Barker

Guv'nor, I know a bit about audiences, don't I?
D'you think it's what happened to-night they mind?

Bertrand

I mind it!

The Barker

You may,
But not they.
They'd forgive the failure
If they could get back again
A few of those old evenings behind it.

Laurent

To-night doesn't matter . . .

Bertrand

Oh, let's get on the track again,
Of what's to be done *now*.

Laurent

The real mess is
That it isn't so easy to find
Another Deburau who may lure . . .
And a nice easy task he'll have of it, won't he? . . .
Us to forgetting
And not regretting
The old Deburau's successes.
Who have you got in your mind?

Bertrand

Paul Legrand, I suppose.

Laurent

Legrand! For good?

Bertrand

Why not? He knows
All the parts.

Laurent

Oh, yes, he knows the parts.

Bertrand

Why not, then?

Laurent

Wait till he starts
To play them all.

Bertrand

What do I pay him his salary for?

Laurent

God knows, if you don't, my dear guv'nor!

Robillard comes through the pass door.

Robillard

Guv'nor.

Bertrand

Well?

Robillard

Deburau wants to know
Who's to play his part in the show
To-night

Bertrand

Why?

Robillard

Well, he wants to know.

Bertrand

Legrand.

Robillard

Legrand!

Bertrand

That's settled.

Robillard

Is it!

You know what Deburau feels about *him*.

Bertrand

What does it matter to me what he feels!
Of course Legrand must play it.
Good heavens! is this a time to visit
On my poor head a silly whim?
Legrand will get through.
What are you after with these appeals,
What do you want me to do?

Robillard

(*To Laurent*)

Well, I'll say it.

(*To Bertrand*)

Close for to-night.

Bertrand

Close!!

What d'you think theatres were made for
There are twenty stalls booked . . . and paid for.
And you suppose
That I'm going to *close!*

Laurent

Just for this once.

Robillard

For Deburau's sake.

Laurent

To please us all.

Robillard

It'll break, . . . it'll break
His heart
If he knows his part
Is to be murdered by that . . . that . . .

Laurent

Find some excuse
For shutting down. No one will ever guess
You did it out of kindness.

Bertrand

What the deuce . . . !
No, *no*, I tell you. Don't keep on plaguing me.

Robillard

Then change the play. You can't do less
Than that, in decency.

Bertrand

I won't, that's flat.
Legrand goes on.

As Bertrand goes to take down the poster Deburau enters.

Deburau

Please let that be.

Legrand

D'you want to play to-night?

Deburau

Never again.
Don't be afraid.

Bertrand

Well, someone must, that's plain.

Charles, Justine, Laplace, and Honorine have come on.

Deburau

Well, someone shall.
Let my name be.

Bertrand

This is nonsensical.

Deburau

Well, then, let me . . .
At least let me put it right
In my own way.
Wait, and you'll see.

Bertrand

You can't play and not play.

Deburau

Are you sure? If I just add a C, a capital C?
There. (*He does so.*) That's enough to efface me
And it gives you Monsieur Charles Deburau to replace me.

Charles

Father!

Bertrand

Your boy?

Deburau

If you please.

Bertrand

But . . .

Deburau

Don't worry. The contract can wait till one sees
What he's worth. Or you can give him my first.
Eight francs a week; that wasn't the worst
Bargain that you ever made, my friend, was it?
Charles, Monsieur Bertrand engages you
At eight francs a week.

Bertrand

But he's a child!

Deburau

Think how a leading part ages you.
I was just his age when you took me on.

Bertrand

But you supered.

Deburau

So I did.

And you told me I'd never learn how to speak
And I never have. How I drove you wild.
How you wept and how you chided.
A great experience; he ought not to lose it
And if I were thinking of him alone . . . !
But there's to-night and the theatre's credit. We
Have that to think of have we not?
And, besides, let's allow for heredity;
I never had the father he's got.

Laurent

That's true.

Robillard

Let him try it.

Bertrand

But he don't know the part.

Deburau

Yes, he does.

Charles

Oh, I do!

Deburau

Many's the time he has sat to spy it,
Such a little fellow, squeezed up in the wings
Prompting me
Unconsciously;
Gesturing things
I was forgetting
—Prompting's an art—
Well, to-night
I propose
To prompt him;
To sit and spy
From that corner dim.
Give up my part?
Not yet . . . not quite!
For to-night
We're to go shares in it . . . he and I.

Charles

My child's game was to play that I was you.

Deburau

What a good game, now I can play it, too!
(*Then to the others*)
Off with you all and leave us alone.
Just for ten minutes give us the stage.

(*To the Barker*)

Get along, you, and think over your funniments!
Sorry to drive away everyone.

(*To Laurent*)

Ah, but thank *you*, good friend.

Laurent

Deburau, let me stay.

Justine

And me.

Honorine

What a treat!

Bertrand

May I stay too?

The Barker

I'll book a seat.

Deburau

Do you really want to hear the sage
Talk to the youngster? Oh, but I'm flattered!
A pretty plain talk without any ornaments,
And no one need stay to the end.

(*To Robillard*)

Run to my dressing place, there's a good fellow.
Get me a black stick, rouge, my powder . . . the white,
Not the yellow.
Oh, and a couple of bands for the head; and the tattered
Hat with the broad brim, too.
And open the wardrobe and bring me the dress—
The one hanging farthest back on your right;
I wore it for my first success
And so shall you
To-night.

Robillard has gone for the things, and when he returns with them, Deburau, as he goes on talking, makes Charles up and dresses him.

Now, pay attention if you please.
Get this firmly fixed in your head,
Acting's as easy as shelling peas,
If . . . Tell me now and tell me truly
Are you nervous about to-night?
Oh, of course, I know that you'll duly
Say that you are. But are you in a real fright?

Charles

I . . .

Deburau

Truly now, I said.

Charles

Yes, I am. I'm terrified.

Bertrand

Now, I ask you, if he's terrified . . . !

Deburau

As he should be, he's terrified.
But that's our own affair—
The audience doesn't want a share.
(*To Charles*)
Shake in your shoes in your dressing-room;
Feel sure you've forgotten
Your part; that you're rotten
In what you remember. Turn so pale
That rouge won't redden you. Be certain you'll fail.
Walk forth as a criminal walks to his doom—
But, once on the scene—
Once the bell starts to ring and the curtain to rise,

Let your fright fly away with it up to the flies.
Once you're over the brink
If you must think of yourself at all, think
You're the greatest actor the world's ever seen!
Now, remember this. Play light,
And be simple; be sincere,
But never be trite.
And never, oh never
Try to be—or to seem—too clever.
What you mean, when you do it, must of course be quite clear.
And it must seem quite clear what you're *going* to do.
For an audience must always feel sure of you,
Yet, when you do it, it must seem accidentally done.
That's not so difficult as it sounds—
It's an effect quite easy to get
When an audience is watching you,
And a play hangs on you.
Ah . . . and before I forget
Never, on any grounds,
Never play second to anyone!
Now, as to our dumb show, always do
Whatever comes most naturally to you.

An audience isn't difficult
To please; if you find them so, that's your fault.
It's only that they won't stand blundering.
You must never leave them wondering
What on earth it is you're at.

Laurent

That was your secret. One turn and they knew.

Deburau

It's a secret anyone's welcome to,
Theirs for the guessing.
(Come a little closer.)
Now; the ordinary gestures, the "Yes, sir" and No, sir,"
You can't grow wrong over. When you come to expressing
Something elaborate; first *think* it right.
Nothing hard in that . . .
(Quite still now, don't move)
If you want to convey "What a pretty girl"
Think it and do
Whatever comes into your head to do.
If it's madness or love,
That you're frightened, or pleased, that your head's in a whirl,

Think, think *hard*, think *intensely*
That you are in love, or in a fright.
Then, when you can't keep still any longer,
When your feeling grows stronger
Than you are, still hold yourself tensely
And steep yourself in it
For the millionth part of a minute,
Then . . . let yourself go,
And it'll come right.
Don't copy me,
Don't copy anyone.
A professor
Of acting can only teach you his faults,
But—let me see—
There may be one
Or two tricks. To become the possessor
Of these . . . it's as simple as turning somersaults!
For example:
That's Time passing.
That's for the weather.
Make your gestures ample.
Now; if you're at a crossing
And someone asks you the way and whether
It's long. Make it long, so. Very long, so.

And that little gesture is a good sudden "No."
You can do it politely . . .
(Lift your eyelids. That's better)
When you're reading a book or a letter
Let your eyes rest lightly
For a shade of a second on every word . . .
(Tuck in your hair a bit; it's unsightly)
Don't play with your back
To an audience, or their attention will slack.
That you can't afford.
And each time that you play
A part, add something new
While something you
Feel is less good, take away.
And . . . love your work.
Remember the actor's calling.
Is the finest in the world.
Is it sometimes a little galling
When, with lip politely curled
And a supercilious smirk,
You are told to your face
That the theatre has no place
Among important things?
I tell you, it's an art,
That has its springs

In the heart
Of all mankind.
So when the world's wiseacres slight it, never mind.
And the triumph of triumphs, to hold
A whole house breathless, to mould
Them to tears or to laughter!
Would I sell that power for a king's
Ransom? Picture it now.
The curtain has risen.
For a moment after,
Silence. Row upon row,
So silent you'd swear you could hear the shakings
Of the earrings that bedizen
That lady there.
Or the manager as he absconds with your share
Of the evening's takings.
All of a sudden you fling
Across the footlights to them
Some trivial thing
That takes their fancy.
Then it begins.
A whisper they sway to, a rhythm.
First it's only a smile you can see,
Like a ripple that has just
Been raised by that tiny gust

Of laughter. But the laughter will keep growing
Till a gale of it is blowing;
A gale that spins
Away with it, amid the silence it has broken
Into a thousand pieces, every token
Of dullness, of care,
Of trouble, of despair.
That's what they come hoping for. It isn't worth their while
To sit three hours in a theatre on the chance that you'll make them smile.
Though, of course, there's some credit in making them smile.
But high renown
We leave to tragedians.
It's they who will always be called the great actors.
Odd, that in this world it's only expedients
For making folk miserable bring you fame.
Well, let them stick to it,
That cold academical glory of theirs,
Their temple of High Art, we can't add a touch to it.
Let them look down
On you, call you a clown.
Let the great world neglect and forget you. Who cares?

It does the same
To all its other benefactors.
You get your pay and more than your pay
If just for a little you draw the breath
Of that glory that passes so quickly away,
Popularity.
Only one thing is better and that's too great a rarity!
If you've tasted that life you need never feel
Starved, till you come to your final meal
With death.

He now turns Charles to the audience dressed like himself.

Ladies and gentlemen, my successor,
Latest recruit to your ranks.
Please to give him a sympathetic
Welcome. My sincerest thanks.
He is to be my best performance
And my last, that's certain.
Here I stand prophetic,
"A greater succeeds a lesser."
I finish; he's ready to commence.
Prompter, ring up the curtain.
Wait a moment, though,

Why couldn't you pull it up again
When it had fallen . . . on me . . . just now?

The Prompter

(*Who has appeared on the stage*)

The rope gave way.

Deburau

The rope gave way!
Robillard, do you remember hearing that gipsy say . . . ?

Prompter

And I can't think why. It had had no extra strain . . .

Deburau

. . . She said that one day it would break of itself,
And never rise again for me;
From that day on I'd be laid on the shelf.
It has come then, you see.
Oh, painted curtain that fell
Between my audience and me;
So lightly on the stage,
So heavily on my soul.
For the last time, I could tell.
Like a guillotine it fell.

Oh, faded curtain, for me
The emblem of the whole
Of Life's beauty and mystery.
In the book of my life you bound
I have turned the final page;
Sleep is stealing on me,
I let it fall to the ground.
They throw on the soldier's bier
The flag that he held so dear.
When I've to be carried away
Don't stifle me with the pall
Of a solemn funeral.
Fling over me
This curtain, carelessly,
That the people you meet on the way
May look and smile and say,
"Why, at last that poor buffoon
Of a Pierrot's flown back to the moon."

But now, ring up, stand by.
For the first appearance of a new Pierrot.

The Curtain goes up.

Look, how it rises to welcome you,
By itself almost,

As it fell of its own accord for me.
Quick, on you go.

Charles dashes through the pass door and on to the stage.

There now, look at him! Won't he do?
Where's another theatre can boast
Such a—such a prodigy?

Robillard

(*half chaffingly*) Come, you're not going to cry!

Deburau

Don't grudge me a tear or two of shameless envy.
There he stands on the threshold of paradise!
Enter; first entrance,
Dancing. No, no, not at a run!
That's right, that's charming; that'll entrance
Them. Yes, your career has begun.
If you'll be humble, and take just a little advice
I'll back that you'll then vie
With the best of them. Now, come here.
Stand where I used to stand.
Where?
Why, in the middle!

Say "Good morning." No, no, one wave of the hand
Will do. And don't fiddle.
When you've done a thing, let it alone.
That's better.

Laurent

Show him your Starving Tramp.

Deburau

Yes, yes. Now, turn toward
Us. Tell us you're dying of hunger. Stamp
With the cold. No, that's too broad.
Not like an animal, like a man.
That's better. Again.

Robillard

Now, the man thieving and caught as he ran.

Deburau

That's not so easy. Come here, I'll explain.
When you want to show . . .

He talks to Charles over the footlights.

Bertrand

(*To the Barker*) St! Amedée, here!

The Barker

Guv'nor?

Bertrand

We're in for it.
You'll have to beat the big drum for the youngster,
Tell 'em this is the very latest bit
Of talent picked from amongst a
Crowd of competitors put in the shade by him.

The Barker

I can gas a lot about the father.

Bertrand

I'd rather
You didn't. He's done for. Why worry?
What's the use now of successes once made by him?
We've the future to think about.
If you mention papa you'd better say
That the boy can beat his father hollow.
Tell 'em he's what papa was thirty years back,
Tell 'em his father has trained him to follow
His footsteps and to cut him out.
And tell 'em that it has cost me a stack

Of money to collar him. Lay it on thick
And be quick.

The Barker goes away.

Deburau

Drop your curtain. The lesson is over.
Ring up on the show
Whenever you like; and discover
The new Pierrot.

The Curtain is dropped.

Robillard

Gaspard, it's good of you.

Deburau

What is?

Robillard

To give the boy his chance.

Deburau

(*Shrugging*) What else could a father do?

Laurent

To have given him all you've got,
To have told him all you know.

Robillard

(*To Charles*) Here; let's have a glance
At you. Well, are you happy?

Charles

Oh, yes!

Deburau

(*To himself*) I've *not* . . .
I've not told him all I know!

The girls gather round Charles.

Justine

And how well you look!

Honorine

Charming!

Justine

So smart!

Honorine

You'll have successes in plenty.
Of all sorts.

Justine

Yes!

Honorine

You've made a start
Already.

Justine

How old are you, Charles?

Charles

I'm twenty.

Deburau

Charles, come here.
Are you losing your heart?
Oh, don't fear
I'll take that in bad part.
But, for a minute more, listen to me.
I look back over my life,
Its failures and successes,
Its impotence and strife;
Now, at the end of it, this is
The lesson I've learnt by heart.
There are two unfading things,
Love and Art.
And not so regretfully
I see them to-day take wings;
I've had my share of both in a way.

But if you've heard me say
Love was all that counted,
I was wrong.
Love without art amounted
To something for a season;
But it can't hold you long.
Art without love? That's rhyme without reason.
No, you must strive
To hold them each by a hand,
If you want to understand
What life is innermostly;
If you want to be
Both happy and alive.
To-night you may make your first success;
If you do, there'll be many more to follow.
Do you think they'll be enough to content you?
Do you think the applause will never sound hollow?
Do you think that is all the good God meant you
To have when he gave you the heart of a man
In the skin of an actor? Gather life's joys while you can;
Life's sorrows, life's dangers;
It's your birthright to know them.
A man's life, nothing less!

Give your audience whole-heartedly all that you
owe them;
But remember that, friends as they are, they are
strangers,
And while their applauding still echoes above you
Find someone to love . . . and, oh, someone
to love you.

The voice of the Barker is heard and the beat of his big drum.

The Barker

Ladies and gentlemen . . .

Honorine

Quiet; he's begun!

Justine

Open the door; we can hear better then. What
fun!

The Barker

Gentlemen and ladies,
Our trade is
To amuse you;
And to-night we offer something new,
A new Pierrot,

To take the place of our world-famed Deburau.
I know what you're going to say, my man;
No one can.
Well, I excuse you,
There are precious few
Who could. But I'm not boasting. I believe
That in these serious matters one can't afford to deceive
One's public; and I never do.
But we *are* going to deceive you, too.
For when you see him, with one accord
You'll say: That is Deburau!
And you'll be right, though you'll be wrong.
What's the secret, what's the riddle?
Who can this be?
As good as he;
As light on his feet, and rather lighter;
As clever as he, and cleverer too;
As charming, and with a little more charm?
Well, I give you my word
That this Deburau
Who is not Deburau, and *is* Deburau . . .
Gentlemen, does it take you so long
To guess?
I thought you'd have stopped me in the middle.

Who *could* be as great a success
As Deburau, and the possessor
Of all his secrets;
Who but one?
His son!
We present you to-night with his son and successor.

Charles

Father, what lies he's telling! What a shame!

Deburau

Hush! That's how he earns his money.

Charles

Let me stop him.

Deburau

No, no!

Charles

But how could I ever earn
half your fame?

Deburau

Who knows? The public is so funny!

DEBURAU

The Barker

Playgoers of Paris,
The performance is just about to begin
And he who tarries
Stands a very good chance of not getting in. . . .

THE END

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